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wide



SEPTEMBER 2023

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# FROM THE EDITOR

WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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# Celebrating Dad

My father was a farmer to his absolute core.

Raised on a farm, he dreamed of owning his own land and worked tirelessly to make that happen.

By the time I was born, he had owned a cattle and thoroughbred horse stud in Australia and a sheep and beef farm in New Zealand.

But he was always looking for the next adventure or challenge.

When I came along as a (hopefully) happy accident when he was 40 years old, he had just purchased another sheep and beef farm in Hawke's Bay.

We moved, my mother and six year old brother with me in a bassinet, new-born and straight from the delivery room, to the old house on the newly purchased farm.

There was a storm that night, and with the power out, the house quickly became far too cold for a baby, so we were bundled back into the car in the dark of night to drive back to my Nana's house in Napier, through the wind and rain.

That was life with my father. Life was never dull.

He was an explorer, an astute businessman, a restless



My Dad, Kerry Prenter. Taken on his farm in New South Wales, Australia, mid 1970s.

spirit but a pragmatic one, a relentless worker but fiercely loving and protective.

It was like living with a firefly, always bright, always darting to the next thing, always illuminating everything around him with a contagious zest for life.

Growing up on the farm was the best gift he could have given us, and being raised by a farming father is a unique thing and special thing.

Farming fathers are perpetually busy, but also always there.

They might be out on the farm in the early hours and not be home until dark, but they are usually there for lunch or smoko break, or for pet day or rugby practice.

There is no nine-to-five Dad, but often, we would be pulled into farm life alongside him.

There is no better education or the way to become closer to

a parent than to be raised on a farm.

My kids have been lucky to have been (at least mostly) raised on a farm, too.

Even though their father and I are no longer together, my kids are lucky to have a great farming Dad who brings them pet lambs and calves, watches sports games, and helps my daughter with her agri-science school work.

It takes a village to raise a child, though.

I firmly believe that, and every one of us who lives in a rural community knows this.

So I want to take a moment to shout out to all the not-Dads who step up for our kids too.

I have some great friends who have given my kids driving lessons, picked them up from school when I couldn't, hung up curtains in their bedrooms and brought us firewood to keep us snug over winter.

The adopted and real Dads, the Stepdads, the Grandfathers, the neighbours, the sports coaches and teachers who go the extra mile.

Thanks to all Dads, still with us or not.

Happy Father's Day, and thanks a million.

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# Awards a growing success

By Claire Inkson  
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With two combine harvesters parked at the door for the Arable awards in Christchurch, the scene was set for a night of shining a spotlight on the stars of the arable sector.

The awards were held at Wigram Airforce Museum on August 10, with a crowd of over 600 attendees, almost double that of the previous year.

The coveted Arable Farmer of the Year Award went to Hugh Richie from Hawkes Bay, whose farm had suffered from flooding during Cyclone Gabrielle.

Judges noted that Richie had built a diverse farm system to cope with the change and adversity.

"He was always looking to do better, always looking to see what he can learn from," the judging panel said.

The Grower of the Year award for Maize was presented to David and Adrienne Wordsworth from Northland.

Sam and Hannah Grant from Ashburton picked up the Grower of the Year award for grain, while Andy and Jo Innes from Innes Fields Ltd in Rakaia won the Grower of the Year for small seeds.

Andy Innes said the Arable Awards were an important part of telling the arable story.

"We need to promote ourselves,



Andy and Jo Innes, winner of Grower of the Year for small seed, credit their team for their success.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

and the industry needs to promote itself.

"We need to tell our story in a positive way and be proud of what we do."

Innes said it was an honour to be nominated, and credited the support of the Innes Field staff and agronomists for the award win.

"It's a team effort.

"We are only as good as the team around us, and we are fortunate to have a great one."

Barenbrug New Zealand Plant Breeding Team won the Plant Breeder/Researcher Award presented by the New Zealand Plant Breeding and Research



Federated Farmers President Wayne Langford with 2023 Arable Farmer of the Year, Hugh Ritchie.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Association (PBRA).

The breeding team was recognised for their contribution to crop development and the impact on seed quality and yield.

PBRA general manager Thomas Chin said that plant breeding is the starting point for the arable and seed industry, with breeders underpinning the arable sector, which generates \$800 million in annual sales, including \$245 million from exports.

"The industry relies on the skills of the many talented individuals as they strive to meet the needs of farmers and growers.

"Their contributions mean a more productive and profitable



Thomas Chin presenting Breeder of the Year Award to Courtney Inch.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

primary industry."

Federated Farmers arable chairperson David Birkett, who was named Arable Farmer of the Year in the 2022 awards, said the awards celebrate the "cream of the crop of New Zealand's arable sector."

"The event is about coming together to network, tell success stories and spotlight the business and investment opportunities the sector generates."

## 2023 Arable Award winners

Innovation Award –

Blair and Jody Drysdale,

Hopefield Hemp

Arable Food Champion –

Rob and Toni Auld, Auld Farm

Distillery

Arable Farmer of the Year –

Hugh Richie

Maize Grower of the Year –

David and Adrienne Wordsworth

Small Seeds Grower of the Year –

Andy and Jo Innes

Grain Grower of the Year –

Sam and Hannah Grant

Researcher of the Year –

Dr Richard Chynoweth from The

Foundation for Arable Research

Environmental and

Sustainability Award -

Andrew and Amy Darling

Emerging Talent Award –

James Abbiss of Silverton

pastoral

Agronomist of the Year –

Paul Johnston, Yara Fertilizers Ltd

Plant Breeder/Researcher

of the Year –

The Barenbrug New Zealand

Plant Breeding Team

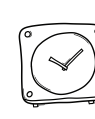
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# Meat the Need inaugural golf day a huge success

By Claire Inkson  
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**M**eat the Need, a charity that links livestock and milk donations from farmers with families in need, hosted its first-ever regional golf day at the Waimate Golf Club.

The competition was a resounding success, raising enough money for 11308 mince meals for Waimate and Timaru food banks.

Over 25 rural businesses sponsored the event, donating prizes and sponsoring golf holes, with Hazlett Rural's Snow Buckley wrapped up the event with an auction.

Rabobanks' longest drive went to Gerard Rawcliffe and Rural Transport's nearest to the pin novelty was awarded to Dave Morgan.

The winning Ambrose team went to Barry Matthews' "Rats Team" from North Otago.

The event, organised by Waimate farmers and Meat the Need champions John and Cara Grogan, was held on June 9 with 20 teams competing in Ambrose-style play over the 18-hole course.

Meat the Need co-founder

and general manager and Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford was pleased with how the event went and acknowledged the importance of Meat the Need champions to the organisation's success.

"We have signed up a lot of Meat the Need champions across the country, and John is one of those champions.

"The role of a champion is not only spreading the word about Meat the Need, but they also have the ability to host fundraising events that benefit their local community," Langford said.

Langford, who runs a dairy operation in Golden Bay with his wife Tyler, says the cost of living crisis has seen a 30 per cent increase in demand from food banks and encourages farmers to get on board and donate to ease food insecurity in their communities.

"The main core of what we do is livestock and milk donated by farmers.

"There is a real opportunity for farmers signing up to donate.

"With milk, we suggest around a litre per cow as a good donation."

Supplying food banks with milk

and meat frees up their resources to be able to focus those funds on other much-needed services, Langford said.

"If we can provide them with food, and they don't have to go out fundraising for it, they can give better help with budgeting and drug addiction services, and that sort of thing.

"When we are a country that is so rich in high-quality protein, why would we not want to do that?"

Langford said there had been an increase in double-income families and senior citizens needing food parcels, a sentiment echoed by Community Link Waimate operations manager Jakki Guilford.

"It's not just beneficiaries, which is what people assume," Guilford said.

"Our clients can range from single beneficiaries to working couples with children, and we are starting to see quite a few seniors in need."

Often people only require a one-off parcel when hit with unexpected bills, such as a washing machine breaking down or a car repair.

"Sometimes they just need something to get them through



Meat the Need co-founder and general manager Wayne Langford says that farmers jumping on board with the organisation is a great way they can help their local communities.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

we don't want people to rely on food banks."

Guilford, whose husband is a dairy farmer, said Meat the Need is a simple way farmers can help their communities, and although they may not need help themselves, their staff might.

"We do quite a bit of support for rural workers who can be having a hard time."

Donations from farmers also mean food parcels contain good, nutritional food, saving food banks money they can spend on other produce.

"Meat the Need can have a tremendous impact on the quality of food that goes out to families, because you can't beat good quality meat," Guilford said.

## Meat the Need Upcoming Events

- Spring Fling Charity Gala Dinner & Auction. "Bringing the Country to Town." Held at the Cordis Hotel in Auckland on September 9. Hosted by Hilary Barry and Scotty Stevenson.
- The Big Feed Rural Telethon to raise money for three million meals across New Zealand. Hosted by Matt Chisholm and Wayne Langford on December 14.



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# Carpet petition a woolly issue

By Sharon Davis

A Geraldine sheep, beef and dairy farmer has launched a petition to stop synthetic carpet tiles being installed in hundreds of rural schools in New Zealand.

The Ministry of Education has signed a contract worth between \$7 million and \$8m with US firm Milliken to import the carpet tiles as part of its refurbishment programme for rural schools.

South Canterbury farmer Angela Blair was upset enough to step out of her comfort zone to raise awareness with a petition on change.org.

"The Government is being hypocritical," she said.

There was a big move to get rid of microplastics and remove plastic bags from supermarkets and a focus on carbon credits - and now they were importing a plastic product from America, she said.

Blair's petition gathered more than 6000 signatures in under two weeks.

She said her petition was an act of frustration, but now she wanted to know why a very similar petition launched in 2020 was "blatantly ignored".

A petition by Amy Blaikie in 2020 called on the Government to use New Zealand wool products for carpeting and insulation in public-funded buildings and KiwiBuild homes.

Blaikie's petition attracted more than 15,000 signatures and was presented to the House of Representatives in August 2020. It was referred to the appropriate minister in February 2021.

Blair wanted to know why there had not been a response.

Even if it was too late to change the latest decision on school carpets, there was still plenty of opportunity to support farmers and the local wool industry.

Apart from being a local natural fibre with good insulation properties, wool was a natural fire retardant, unlike synthetic nylon which melts and was "horrendous" in a fire, said Blair.

Mid Canterbury wool merchant Mainland Wool stands behind Blair's petition.

Director Chris Bell said it "beggars belief" that the Government would put all-imported synthetic carpet from the US into schools.

"They came out and supported the wool industry and now they've turned their backs on us."

Bell said he supported the petition but feared it would fall on deaf ears.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor was approached for comment.

A spokesperson for O'Connor was able to confirm the 2020 petition had been referred to then economic development minister Stuart Nash.



There have been thousands of signatures in favour of choosing wool instead of plastic. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Due to an administrative error, the petition was not presented to the House, she said.

The spokesperson said the current Minister of Economic Development, Barbara Edmonds, would fix the error and present the original petition "before the House suspends this term".

Blair said it was "the best news ever" when told that the 2020 petition would finally be presented.

Ministry of Education head of

property Sam Fowler told media that Milliken's tender provided the best overall value.

He said Milliken outperformed wool carpet tile providers in performance specifications, the supplier's approach in working with the ministry, and cost.

"In primary schools, carpets endure heavy use, wear, and dirt, so it's important for the product to last a long time and be cost-effective in the long run. The selected carpet tiles exceed the

Ministry's warranty requirements and therefore won't need to be replaced frequently. The selected product is also materially less expensive than other options."

The tiles fulfilled the ministry's recycling and carbon footprint goals, he said.

## The Campaign for Wool

The New Zealand-based chapter of The Campaign for Wool has launched an advertising campaign under the banner "live naturally, choose wool" to promote the use of wool as the preferred alternative to "not fantastic" plastic alternatives for carpet, insulation, bedding, drapes and furnishings.

One advert promotes wool's energy efficiency and claims wool provides 10 times the moisture management of plastic and synthetic products - and helps to reduce dampness and therefore mould in homes.

Another advert targets the fire risk of nylon and other synthetics. It claims wool resists ignition, does not melt or stick to the skin when hot, or let off toxic fumes.

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## How values can guide us through difficult times

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

As a farmer's wife and counsellor specialising in rural mental health, Kathryn Wright is well-versed in the challenges facing rural communities.

A recurring theme often present in Wright's counselling sessions with rural clients is overwork or overwhelm.

For farm owners and operators, this often stems from real or perceived financial pressure from banks or the strain of appearing competent and keeping up, Wright says.

"If they feel like they've 'dropped the ball' somehow, they think they will be judged, or people will see what is happening.

"So the overwhelm or overwork leads to a serious loss of time, which can impact them doing the things that give their life value."

Sport, time with friends and holidays may all drop away due to time constraints, issues which are not limited to farm owners but can also affect farm workers.

"There are some bosses, certainly

not all of them – there are some good ones out there – that expect the world from their workers."

Wright says that while the nature of farm work can mean it's tempting to have staff on standby on their days off when jobs are their responsibility, such as unloading a stock truck, for example, it's not sustainable.

"There still needs to be pockets of time where they are off the clock and aren't expected to do anything.

"Sometimes they need to get away from the farm to do that."

Farm succession and family farm partnerships are other common issues Wright sees her clients struggling with.

"It could be a sibling partnership, or mum or dad are still on the farm and trying to step back and let their kids take over, but still not really letting go of the reins."

Generational differences and lack of communication around farm business decisions can cause interpersonal conflict and hurt between family members.

Younger generations tend to be the ones that suffer as the older generation often doesn't see there



A recurring theme often present in Kathryn Wright's counselling sessions with rural clients is overwork or overwhelm. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

is a problem, Wright says.

"The solution is communication and for the older generation to try and see the younger generation's viewpoint.

"A lot of that is working through the anger and frustration, to come to some form of collaboration.

"It's hard, and it's ongoing.

"I've seen so many of the younger generation have to leave and work somewhere else because it's just untenable.

"It's heartbreaking."

Increasing government and environmental regulations add to stress levels and feelings of uncertainty.

"There's always that threat of wondering when things will become unsustainable, how they will pay for things and what will happen if it becomes unviable.

"It's always there, in the back of people's minds, and we know they are doing their best.

"They care about their environment, and they care about their stock.

"I haven't met a farmer who doesn't."

Wright suggests looking at on-farm stress and conflict through the lens of your core values when searching for solutions or ways to cope better.

"Values are things that are important to you, that guide you through life, kind of like a compass that directs you to what matters to you," Wright said.

Wright helps her clients establish what their values are and then guides them to look to those values when addressing a problem.

If a person's value is patience, the answer may be to wait out a solution.

If one of their values is social connection, that may look like joining a Young Farmers Club or taking up a sport.

"If someone wants to give this a go, there are loads of value lists you can download online.

"Go through them, highlight the ones that matter to you, and then think about whatever problem you are having, whether it be succession or overwhelm, for example.

"If you were to bring those values to the fore, what would that look like in terms of showing up in the situation?

"How are you making decisions, and do they align with your values?"

When issues like government regulations can cause farmers to question whether they want to stay farming, Wright recommends remembering what values brought you into agriculture in the first place.

## Safeguarding family farming futures

*Fox and Associates create legacies with land*

Rural estate planning. Just three words but there's no doubt they're highly significant. That's because estate planning holds a critical role in the agricultural sector, enabling the seamless transfer of family farm ownership and control from one generation to the next. It often involves changing land boundaries and if it does then few do it better than award-winning Christchurch land surveying firm, Fox and Associates.

They've been around for over 40 years, specialising in creating legacies with land and safeguarding family farming futures with professional land planning expertise, which is where Fox and Associates'



Alex Liggett

professional surveyors Craig McInnes and Alex Liggett come in.

They're from farming backgrounds, understand the concerns of rural people and enjoy helping families through the various complexities that come with estate planning.

"We keep a pretty close eye on managing the whole land planning process to make sure that families get the end result that they want," said McInnes, who is also a Fox and Associates' director.



Craig McInnes

"We handle everything, from dividing the farm between siblings, or selling blocks to release equity to buy out non-farming siblings, and making sure all the right consents are obtained.

"We understand the subdivision process and the different forms of land ownership, including easements, covenants, and other encumbrances."

In simple terms, McInnes and Liggett project manage the whole deal for their clients from start to finish.

"We can do that by working with a team of professionals and experts, such as a client's accountant, solicitor, valuer and real estate agent, to help achieve the desired end result."

McInnes said it was all about enabling a smooth transition of farm ownership and control to the next generation.

"It's about ensuring the retiring generation benefit from the wealth they have created, while making it affordable for the incoming

generation.

"The estate planning process is also an important vehicle for communicating family expectations to avoid potential messy disputes later because there's a lot at stake."

Fortunately, Fox and Associates are there to make it easy, which includes offering an initial no-obligation chat to chart a pathway through the obligatory land planning red tape.

"We are a boutique consultancy. We look after our customers," McInnes said.

"We get great satisfaction seeing the succession or estate plan being implemented, which usually creates ease of mind for all family members."



# Farmer confidence dips to historic low levels

By Sharon Davis

Farmer confidence has plummeted to historic lows, according to Federated Farmers.

A survey of about 1000 farmers in July highlighted the four biggest concerns: debt, interest rates and banks; regulation and compliance costs; climate change and emissions trading policies; and input costs.

Of the farmers who responded, 80% said economic conditions were bad, up from 65% of farmers who responded to the previous survey in January this year.

Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford said farmers were dealing with high interest rates, "huge inflation" and a steep decline in the prices they were likely to receive for meat and milk.

"We're also facing an unprecedented level of regulatory change that is heaping on costs, undermining profitability, and creating huge uncertainty for farmers.

"Unfortunately, all these challenges have arrived at the same time, which just compounds the pressure farmers are feeling - it's just not sustainable."



Climate change, and the damage it does, are among farmers' main concerns.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Langford said Federated Farmers was concerned for farmer wellbeing and the flow-

on effect the challenges would have on farming families, rural communities, and the New

Zealand economy.

"When farmers aren't profitable or feeling confident, they stop

spending money and try to cut any costs they can from their business."

Langford said the implications of that flow right through the economy.

"This should serve as a wake-up call for all political parties, banks, and processors that something needs to urgently change. There needs to be a real focus on reducing the costs and uncertainty farmers are facing," he said.

More than two-thirds of farmers expect economic conditions to deteriorate over the next 12 months.

The number of farmers making a profit dropped 28 points between January and July, and the majority expected their profits to fall over the coming year.

The survey described the situation as a continuation of the perfect storm - with falling international dairy and meat commodity prices - coupled with large increases in farm inputs such as fuel, fertiliser and agri-chemicals.

Staff shortages both on and off-farm had crimped production and increased costs, while higher interest rates had bumped up debt servicing costs.

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# Young Plant Producer of the Year winner named

By Claire Inkson  
[claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Lydia O'Dowd, head propagator at Rolleston's Southern Woods Nursery, has won the prestigious 2023 Young Plant Producer of the Year title.

O'Dowd pitched her skills against four other finalists, with the winner announced following the finalist's speeches at an awards dinner in Christchurch on July 19.

O'Dowd says she was more excited than nervous going into the competition.

"I've just been really looking forward to putting my skills to the test, gaining more experience and meeting other people in the industry my age that are passionate about what they are doing."

The competition took place at Lincoln University over two days, where the five finalists were tested on their skills in finance and dispatch, biosecurity, plant propagation and identification, tool maintenance, agrichemical use and irrigation.

O'Dowd, who is passionate about sustainability and finding alternatives to agrichemicals, says

she found a career in horticulture almost by accident.

"I was studying something else at university and not enjoying it, so I just took a random paper to fill in the year, which happened to be plant biology."

O'Dowd decided while university wasn't for her, she realised she had a deep interest in plants and set about travelling the country, gaining experience in the horticulture industry wherever she could.

"I worked on vineyards, orchards, potato farms and that kind of thing."

"When I was ready to settle back in Christchurch, I got a job at a nursery and realised I'd found my place."

"It's just been all go from there."

O'Dowd has worked at Southern Woods Nursery for three years and has completed certificates in NZ Horticulture in Nursery production.

Along with her trophy, Lydia has won a 12-month programme of mentorship, plus a \$4000 fund to advance her career in plant production.

She plans to complete a Diploma in Primary Industry Business Management, allowing

her to gain the skills to step into a management position within the plant production industry, with a long-term goal of owning a horticulture business.

"I'd love to own my own native nursery one day and contribute more to the restoration of our natural environment in New Zealand," O'Dowd said.

For now, though, O'Dowd has her sights on the Young Horticulturist of the Year Award in Auckland this November, where she will compete against finalists from the entire horticulture sector, vying for a prize pool of more than \$20,000.

#### The Young Plant Producer 2023 runners-up were:

- Ellen Ballantine of vegetable breeding company Enza Zaden in Puni, Auckland
- Cameron Hay of commercial plant nursery, Ardmore Nurseries in Cleveland.
- August Von Reiche of medicinal cannabis research and development company Helius Therapeutics in East Tamaki, Auckland
- Jake Linklater of non-profit native nursery Nova Natives in Templeton, Christchurch



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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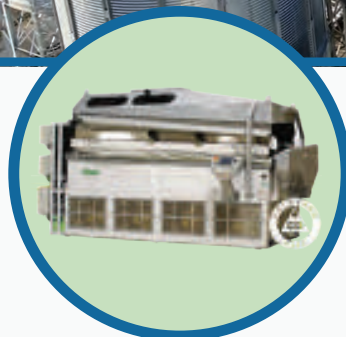
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# Debate more polarised

Global warming has become increasingly polarised, with people talking past each other rather than looking for solutions. A political science professor says people need to listen to each other to ensure sustainability.

By Sharon Davis

Climate change is an “unequivocal threat with a brief and rapidly closing window” in which to make a difference.

But, University of Canterbury political science Professor Bronwyn Hayward says, views on climate change have become increasingly polarised over recent years - with a political divide and a rural-urban divide.

Talking to delegates at a Rural Women NZ event at the Tinwald Function Centre last month, Hayward pointed to examples like Green Party supporters wanting a lot of action on climate change, middle of the roaders wanting some action, and others like National and ACT at the other

end of the spectrum who wanted a cautious approach to climate change commitments.

Hayward, a lead author for the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, said people “talk angrily past each other” and don’t look at the problem that needed to be fixed.

“It means we don’t have a common language to talk about climate change.”

Primary sector leaders who work on the land did see climate change as the major issue facing their sector.

But outside of the sector, there was more division. Some people felt hard done by and battled for their own interests, she said.

There was a need for more meaningful dialogue. Hayward

said people needed to take the “time and empathy to listen to people not like you”.

## Red tape

There was quite a strong lobby in the farming community against red tape and regulation and a feeling amongst farmers that there was far too much regulation. However, Hayward said regulation helped to build trust with consumers.

A recent study found consumer trust in farming grew when consumers believed trusted people and organisations were monitoring farm production, land use and emissions.

Provided regulations were fair and equitable they help to build trust.

A lot of farmers were “working their butts off” on sustainability.



University of Canterbury political science Professor Bronwyn Hayward.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

For example, 96% of dairy farmers knew their emission profile.

“The more the public

understands this the more it builds trust,” Hayward said.

## Transport and carbon emissions

The New Zealand public tended to see methane gas as the problem, but the biggest issue was carbon emissions - and cities produced 77% of all carbon emissions, she said.

“There is a lot of anxiety around methane but it is hard to lower. It is easy to lower carbon.”

The oil industry also had a role lobbying behind the scenes for a focus on methane, to buy the carbon industry more time, Hayward said.

New Zealand was quick to build seawalls or install sirens, but not at creating effective solutions.

“You can’t plant or biofuel your way out of it.”

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# FARMINGFASTFIVE

We ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture and what farming means to them

We ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Today we talk to Andrew Mason.

## 1. What did your journey into farming look like?

I grew up on a sheep and beef farm in Okuku, managed by my parents. I helped them run their own farm up the road at nights and at the weekends.

The economically and climatically difficult 1980s were a real feature of this upbringing, and even today it still reminds me how difficult farming can be at times.

After leaving school I went high country mustering for a few years, where I really lived the dream with a big team of dogs and covered a lot of country from Marlborough, down to South Canterbury and the Mackenzie Country, Lake Wanaka and Lake Hawea, and through to Queenstown.

I still look back on those days as having some of the best job satisfaction I've ever had, though in my early twenties while considering a couple of managers jobs I came to the realisation that the ladder I was on had no rungs to farm ownership on it, so I turned them both down and with no plan I moved into town seeking somehow to make enough money to buy a farm.

My first job was selling residential real estate, which I did for a couple of months despite knowing it wasn't for me by Wednesday of the first week, and then moved into selling commercial real estate for the next 13 years where I had the great fortune of making many lifelong friends and contacts, many of whom I have had the privilege of now working, investing and partnering with for over 30 years.

I felt privileged working with and under some pretty clever and decent people which still defines me today.

Despite what I considered real estate's "golden handcuffs", in 2005 I left selling real estate and went out investing on my

own aided at that time by a small portfolio of properties I had purchased throughout the previous decade in real estate, leveraged against my income.

In addition to managing these properties I became involved with a number of former clients in a number of larger scale, predominantly land-based developments in both executive or governance positions.

At this time Angie was working in the corporate field and, whilst not from a farming background, was bought up on a lifestyle block on the edge of Christchurch, with an obsession with horses.

She gravitated naturally to clients in the rural sector in her corporate career and would dream of living in the country surrounded by horses and open spaces.

As so often happens, kids, life and working out of our family's home in Merivale and Angie's business in town became the focus, rather than making the change by selling it all and going farming, not helped by the healthy respect I had for farming's financial viability!

That was until Angie and I drove past Amberley House and its auction sign one Saturday afternoon, coming home from the Hawarden Show.

Angie wouldn't let it go and the stirrings of being a country boy again were rekindled by her constant prompting.

Some weeks later we turned up at the auction totally unprepared having looked at the house in the dark the night before and the rest, as they say, is history. But spare a thought for the seven kids that we uprooted from Merivale and plonked a mile out of Amberley up a kilometre-long shingle drive.

## 2. Tell us a little bit about your farming operation?

Having now moved ourselves to Amberley, Angie and I set about establishing the farming operation,



Andrew and Angie Mason.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

initially with sport horses, then cattle following the purchase of St Leonards Station out the back of Culverden three years later, and a neighbouring purchase to triple Amberley House's farm size to accommodate young stock from the growing cattle operation out of St Leonards.

Today the combined farms of around 1000 ha see 450 cows out to the bull and we winter 150 younger cattle. In addition Amberley Houses' sport horse stud of breeding mares and younger stock together with up to ten foals a year creates a herd that at times reaches over 50 horses. We also sell breeding services to our stallions, predominantly Remi Lion King.

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

Putting together a farming operation that was never part of a previously operating unit has come with its own challenges and rewards.

The challenges of finding stock levels, rotations and things that work have given great satisfaction as we've bedded them down, as has the progress made in developing the properties.

Tasks that once seemed daunting were all picked away at and with time came the satisfaction of achievement and the enjoyment of their fruits.

In the sport horse side it's very time consuming breeding just one horse, and a whole host of factors come into play to produce a single horse of competition quality. It can be both a heart-breaking and rewarding industry.

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

For me it's personally satisfying being a "sheep and beef" farmer - just like that kid growing up who always wanted to be one (albeit with only a mob of sheep kept for the house).

The job satisfaction this vocation gives is right up there and some days at the office have one hell of a view.

Other great aspects of the job are that Angie and I can run the farms together; Angie is more involved in the day-to-day sport horse side and I the cattle operation, but we are able to both help each other out with our operations during busy times.

The other great aspect is the relationship I have with my head shepherd, my father David Mason.

Shortly turning 79, Dad takes a beat on the hill with me most weeks with his team of dogs and still insists on jumping into the race and spending all day marking all the front country calves in December, normally around 80 odd, and camping out with us for the week in the musterers' hut out back when we mark the back country calves.

Weaning can become a bit of a marathon when we bring up to 800 head of cattle over the range and hold them in pens for a week for weaning, TB testing, health treatments and culling etc, and despite 7-10 days of early starts and late finishes, Dad's always first into the truck.

After almost 70 years of farming there's not much he hasn't seen, but he become pretty excited recently seeing some of the genetic breeding initiatives now becoming available to us.

We are proud of the stock we are breeding, both cattle and horses, and we have started to see the young horses we have bred doing well for their new owners, which is a thrill.

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

A journey into farming without a family farm succession plan, offering a viable pathway, is not an easy one to map out.

Sadly this is never more so than attempting to do it from within the industry, which has led to increasing labour constraints, as many likely employees see the writing on the wall and take a different career and make a life in another industry, a real loss to New Zealand and New Zealand's farming's future.

We all owe it to the next generation to look out for talent when we see it and promote and look after these talented and hardworking young men and women when we come across them.

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# Rural Women New Zealand: More than just scones

By Claire Inkson  
claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Rural Women New Zealand began as a grassroots organisation in 1925, started by a group of women looking at ways to connect and share their life experiences on the farm.

The organisation has stood the test of time, becoming a driving force in advocating for rural communities, providing connection and delivering support in times of need.

"We support our rural communities in whatever way, shape or form that may take," Rural Women New Zealand national president Gill Naylor says.

"Whether that is through social connection, supporting other charities within our communities or through wider national charities that may affect women."

The organisation has gained some traction recently, addressing the increase in postal rates for rural deliveries and working with the Telecom Users Association of New Zealand around rural connectivity issues.

"Ensuring equity of access for everyone is becoming more

important even in our daily lives.

"We need to get good internet and cellular coverage to those isolated, and in some cases not so isolated parts of New Zealand, and our postal service is a key service for rural communities, and we tend to miss out."

Rural Women New Zealand has been instrumental in coordinating relief for adverse events, from the flooding in Mid Canterbury to the more recent devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle.

The organisation's adverse events relief fund, buoyed by donations from members and supporters, can grant up to \$1000 to those experiencing severe hardship.

It's about more than just money, though, Naylor says.

"There is a massive hug of support that goes with it."

"And we are really key to distributing meals to people that have been affected and checking in on people."

Members have also been compiling care packages, and the organisation has been inundated with items and is in the process of delivering packages to over 250 properties, Naylor said.

"It's that wrap-around care and



Rural Women New Zealand is in the process of delivering care parcels to over 250 properties affected by Cyclone Gabrielle. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

connection that we pride ourselves on in situations like this."

## Taking Rural Women New Zealand into the future

There are arguably some misconceptions about what is involved in being a Rural Women's New Zealand member, which can deter younger women from joining.

Being a member can be as busy or as social as you want it to be, Naylor says.

For those who want to be involved in advocacy work or are interested in government policy, there is scope for members to affect change.

For those wanting social connection, branches provide sessions outside formal meetings for people to connect.

With membership only \$50, it's an affordable way to meet new people and help the community.

"There's no compunction for everything to be within a formal branch group; we are very flexible with that as well."

"It can just be a matter of having connection points."

## The NZI Rural Women New Zealand Business Awards 2023

The NZI Rural Women New Zealand Business Awards aim to support, recognise and celebrate entrepreneurial rural women.

"We are always blown away by the entries we get, the passion people have and the ingenuity around what they are doing," Naylor says.

"It's amazing and inspiring."

Entries are across seven categories.

- Emerging Business
- Love of the Land
- Creative Arts
- Rural Health and Well Being
- Rural Champion
- Innovation
- Bountiful Table

The winner from each category will be announced in early October, with award winners becoming finalists for the Supreme Award, which will be announced at a presentation at The Rydges Hotel in Christchurch on November 24.



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# Zeba® - the revolutionary 'rainmaker' for crops

A cow is exposed to many changes during the drying, run off and transition period, making it important to try and anticipate her needs.

Optimising water use is one of the hottest topics there is in New Zealand agriculture today. It's a real pain point for farmers and growers, and can also take a toll on the environment.

The availability of water is not a new challenge locally or globally. And that's particularly true at the 'pointy end' of growing.

Getting crops established, especially in dryland systems, has traditionally been at the mercy of anticipated rainfall. And, even if rain came, parched soils could mean moisture uptake by crops wasn't enough to get them over the line and thriving.

Rising costs, and increasingly tight water restrictions, also mean irrigation is not the panacea it was thought to be just a couple of decades ago.

But a breakthrough soil conditioner could be the answer to managing soil moisture (and water-soluble nutrients including nitrates) more successfully. And without negatively impacting the environment.

Zeba from agricultural protection solutions provider UPL NZ Ltd is a patented, granular, bio-degradable, free flowing product that helps retain and regulate soil moisture.

UPL NZ Otago Southland Regional Manager Tom McDonald says Zeba increases the water-holding capacity of soil (field capacity) allowing crops to use the moisture in the soil that is held there longer by Zeba. "It might sound like a cliché but Zeba is a game changer, when it's used appropriately."

Tom says the product can decrease the amount of water needed for irrigation. And provides greater yields for less cost when rainfall is a limiting factor.

He says the release of the product is timely.

"Zeba helps manage agriculture's water footprint and helps address water use and supply issues; those are front and centre for the sector right now. With an El Niño weather pattern forecast, that also brings an added pressure on the horizon for farmers and growers."

Tom says while relatively new to New Zealand, Zeba has performed well in arid areas of countries including Australia,



A crop treated with Zeba.

South Africa and India. And, he says, data from New Zealand is already compelling.

Zeba activates when rain falls, or irrigation is applied, and has the capability to hold that moisture in reserve. "It increases soil's nutrient and water holding capacity and it is easy to apply, down the spout, at sowing."

"Think of Zeba as an insurance policy. Much like the way you'd choose to use treated seed over untreated. It gives you extra certainty."

Zeba enables farmers and

growers to directly increase the efficiency of the water they use, along with improving soil nutrition, which benefits plants, soil, and the environment. As it's biodegradable, Zeba leaves no residues behind.

Tom says Zeba will recharge when there is additional moisture before eventually breaking down. "It recharges with extra rain or irrigation, though performance will diminish in 5-6 months."

Zeba is not all things to all paddocks or all farming systems. "Where Zeba especially comes into its own is when you're looking at crop establishment, particularly for crops like forage brassicas, cereals, lucerne or beet, where you only really get once chance."

"We've also had impressive results in the establishment of kale, following a crop of cereal. You can see a real difference between the Zeba-treated area versus the untreated."

Tom says larger scale irrigated arable and dryland farmers will not be the only ones to benefit from using Zeba. "For commercial growers, especially on a smaller scale, Zeba is an answer to their prayers. It means more yield for less water application. That can be a big saving!"

He says the product also has potential for growers of other specialist crops including high-value, small salad greens and other vegetables which don't have a lot of time to establish strong root systems before harvest.

"Zeba is an ideal tool in areas where you can't use irrigation but want to retain as much moisture in the soil as possible, so crop growth can be maximised and growth checks minimised."

A corn starch-based super absorbent, Zeba stores water and releases it when plants need it. Each Zeba granule can hold up to 400 times its own weight in water and with a high cation exchange capacity it is able to positively interact with soil nutrients, keeping both water and nutrients where the plant roots need them most. Tom says that helps address an urgent challenge for farmers and growers.

The unique starch content of Zeba also supports soil microbial communities promoting a more sustainable environment.

This year's summer is predicted to be dry. So, if you want to retain as much moisture as possible, and get crops off to a great start, then talk to your local technical field representative or UPL about Zeba.

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# Lifestyle

GUARDIAN FARMING | September 2023

## Art in a Waipara garden

### EXCITING CONTENT:

- Making a difference – P21
- Taking the reins in the Canadian wilderness – P22

Another horse with no name by Jacqui Chamberlain Gibbs.





# Art in a Waipara garden

Laura Forbes' creative way to turn her passion into off-farm income.



Laura and James Forbes on their property 'Rangatahi Downs', in Waipara, North Canterbury where they live with their two children, Clementine and Henry.  
PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

By Claire Inkson  
[claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Rangatahi Downs, home to James and Laura Forbes, lies on the flats of Waipara, flanked by vineyards under the shadow of the iconic Three Deans peaks.

Third-generation farmer James Forbes has focussed on simplifying the farming business on the 430-hectare property he and Laura purchased around ten

years ago, that was part of the original family farm.

They set to work putting a quarter of the property into irrigation to combat the typical dry North Canterbury climate.

"We are trying to keep it as simple as we can with the labour we have and the environment we live in."

The farm runs crossbred sheep and dairy support, which Forbes said has given them stability in a

volatile market.

"Dairy support has been consistently good for us in the last fifteen years.

"Unlike a commodity, it's been steady, which has been good because we had to invest in the irrigation development."

Laura, who has over twenty years of experience working in the art industry, has made the most of their location in the Waipara Wine Valley, turning



'Another horse with no name' by acclaimed artist Jacqui Chamberlain Gibbs.  
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

her passion for art into a business and generating off-farm income.

As well as working as a philanthropy and development manager for SCAPE public arts, Laura is the driving force and founder of North Canterbury's outdoor art exhibition, 'Sculpture. North Canterbury'.

The annual event is held at Pegasus Bay Winery in rural Waipara, just a short drive from

the Forbes' farm.

The event kicks off with a first access opening party on October 13 before being free to the public for the following two weeks.

Laura began 'Sculpture. North Canterbury' in 2018, and as one of the few outdoor exhibitions in Canterbury, the event has gone from strength to strength and is the highlight of the spring calendar for art lovers and wine buffs alike.

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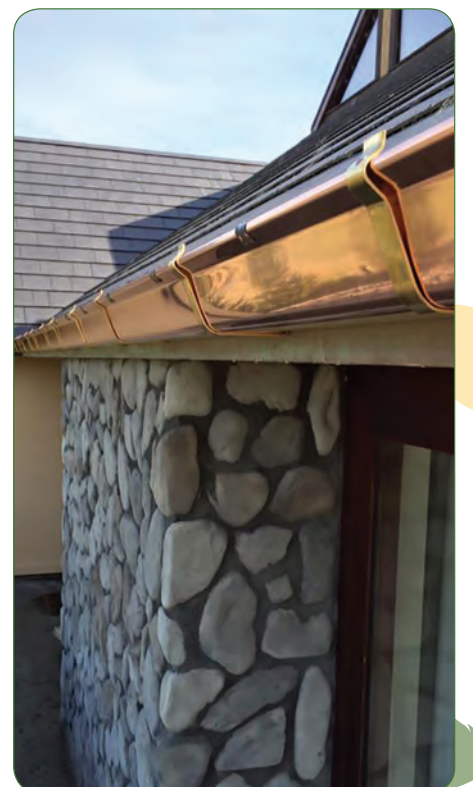
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'Pukeko' by Simon Babbister. The sculptures are a diverse range of mediums and styles. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

"We start with an opening night, which is limited capacity, and that's been really big for art lovers and people who love Pegasus Bay."

Those who attend the opening night are treated to canapés and Pegasus Bay wine and the chance to meet the artists behind the sculptures.

The gardens at Pegasus Bay Winery are meticulously cared for, with streams, ponds, topiaries, boxed hedging and ornate bridges, making it the perfect backdrop for an outdoor exhibition.

"They have full-time gardeners who absolutely love the space they work in every day."

"I work with them, and they help place the artwork and give me feedback. "It's an incredible garden."

Sculptors from all over the country exhibit, and Laura handpicks new artists, giving the event a different look and feel each year.

"I'm particularly excited to have Tim Main signed up this year."

"His work is elaborate and detailed; it is just so beautiful."

Laura said she also has a few artists that haven't shown for a while, such

as Dunedin's Moira Crossman and favourites, such as Jacqui Gibbs Chamberlain.

The exhibition will display around thirty different pieces in addition to Pegasus Bays' permanent outdoor sculpture collection.

Although Pegasus Bay Winery restaurant is closed, visitors that don't make it to the opening night but wish to view the pieces during the two-week event can enjoy a coffee or treats from the winery delicatessen while they explore the grounds.

"They have amazing coffee and some sweet treats, so you can drop by in the morning and don't have to drink wine," Laura said.

"But if it's a beautiful day, and you suddenly get thirsty, you can have some wine, cheese, and crackers, and it's easy to spend a few hours."

Pegasus Bay, which has picked up its fair share of awards over the years for its wine, is owned by the Donaldson family, who Laura said have "an amazing energy."

"They are the most incredible people to work with; there's never been a bad moment."



Pegasus Bay Winery grounds are the perfect backdrop for 'Sculpture. North Canterbury.' PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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# Celebrating Fathers' Day

Happy Father's Day to all the Dads out there from the team at the Rural Guardian!

With Father's Day coming up, we took a visit to Chertsey school, and asked the room three students what they loved most about their Dads.

Here is what some of them had to say.

"Happy Father's Day to my Stepdad.

I love how you take me out to different places, and how you spend time with us.

Thank you for taking my siblings and I to and from school.

I really appreciate how you look after us.

I love when you make me laugh and you tell me funny jokes.

You are strong, thank you for looking after our family."

— Leo, age 10

"Happy Father's Day to my Stepdad.

My Stepdad is also called Caleb.

I love how you are really good at cooking, everybody in our house loves your food, especially the chicken nuggets.

I appreciate how you take us to Christchurch so we can play at Chipmunks.

You are very cool, you work really hard so we can have a roof over our heads."

— Caleb, Age 10

"Happy Father's Day Dad.

I hope this makes this Father's Day the best Father's Day of your life.

I love how you spend time with us and take us on incredible adventures like mountain biking, paragliding and camping.

My favourite thing about my Dad is that he is full of surprises.

I love how he surprises us, like taking us bowling and taking us rafting down the Clarence river."

— Casey, Age 10

"Happy Father's Day, Dad.

You are good at farming and you are good at putting shoes on the horses because you are a talented farrier.

You make me laugh when you tell jokes and you are nice.

You are smart and can be silly too.

I love how generous and kind you are.

Thank you for teaching me how to ride horses."

— Ruby, Age 8

"Happy Father's Day Dad.

Thank you for being the best dad in the whole world.

My Dad is a hard working farmer.

I love the way he teaches us to build things like our tree house. It was fun making it with my brothers."

— Jackson, Age 8



Room 3 of Chertsey School celebrating Fathers' Day.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

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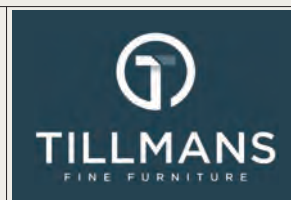
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Jess Ryan and Dylan Bradley founded Herdstrong as a passion project for mental health and wellbeing.



Dog training and welfare days get young farmers off-farm and connecting with like-minded people. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

# Couple making a difference

By Claire Inkson  
[claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

A young Mid Canterbury couple have started a mental health initiative that utilises working dogs to aid connection and well-being across the agriculture sector.

Jess Ryan and Dylan Bradley founded Herdstrong after Dylan experienced a sense of isolation whilst working on a farm in the Mackenzie Country.

"Dylan left his job just before lockdown because he found he was struggling with his mental health and didn't feel like he had anyone to turn to," Jess says.

"It wasn't from a lack of friends, but from a lack of understanding."

Jess said it is common for farmers to tough it out and hope those feelings fade.

The pair met during lockdown in Auckland before moving to Darfield.

Both had struggled with mental health and had friends with similar experiences.

"We just kind of meshed together and knew we wanted to make a difference."

Headstrong, which Jess describes not as a business but more of a "passion project", is a space where people who are struggling can be open about speaking up about their mental health journey and learn how to have conversations with friends who may be struggling.

With working dogs as a catalyst, the pair are looking at farm dog training days to get farmers off-farm and connect with like-minded people.

"Dog training can provide a common topic of conversation and serve as a social lubricant."

"Life on the farm is often isolated, and everyone can benefit from a day out meeting like-minded people and sharing experiences."

"It's a good way to get farmers off-farm."

Working dogs can help farmers' well-being and, as companions, can decrease stress, improve mood and reduce depression, Jess says.

When farmers are stressed, however, dogs are often the first to take the brunt of their owner's frustrations, whether by a few harsh words in the yards or by

less than adequate care.

By improving the health and well-being of our dogs, we, in turn, strengthen our own, Jess said.

"Some farmers still have dogs working 50 hours a week, but sleeping on a hardwood floor or in an apex kennel with a hole in the top."

A study of 641 working dogs between 2014 and 2018 conducted by Vet Life, in conjunction with Massey University, confirms this.

The study found that of the dogs that took part, 74 per cent had clinical abnormalities, such as arthritis which is unsurprising considering the average farm dog travels an estimated 20 kilometres each day.

Vaccination rates were shown to be low in adult working dogs, and with 85 per cent of dogs fed meat, worms were also an issue.

The study also reported that 86% of dogs were housed in uninsulated kennels, 44% had kennel bedding, and 52% were not given a coat at any stage.

The recommended temperature to house a dog is 20-26 degrees, and with temperatures in the

South Island dropping below zero in winter, insulated kennels and jackets are a must for healthy working dogs.

"So we need to change that and normalise dogs with jackets on and in good quality kennels, with quality feed and supplements during busy periods," Jess said.

Richard Emsley, owner and founder of Southern Cross Dog Kennels, was impressed with the Herdstrong ethos and has been a big supporter of the project.

"If you are mentally fit when you wake up in the morning to do your job, the pressures of your job don't get to you, and you don't tend to neglect your priorities," Richard said.

Working dogs as a high labour unit should be a priority, but they are often undervalued.

"So the value of your own mental health goes down the chain to the rest of your working team, whether that is actual staff or your dogs."

Jess and Dylan rely on support from businesses such as Southern Cross Kennels to host off-farm dog training events and keep the initiative going.

Herdstrong merchandise sales keep the wheels turning, but funding remains a challenge.

The last order of merchandise was paid for out of the couple's savings.

"Herdstrong is beginning to feel like a business, and that's not why we started it," Jess said.

"It's not something we want to make money from."

"We are a young couple; we want to have kids in the next few years and buy a house."

"So we want to make a difference, but it can't come at our own cost."

Determined to keep going, Jess is planning the next Herdstrong "Back Your Pack" off-farm dog welfare and training day to encourage connection and improve the health and well-being of farmers and their dogs.

"We want to give young working dog owners the vital tools for happy and healthy working dogs and 'grow our herd' by bringing together people in a neutral space who are mental health aware and are prepared to lend an ear and speak up if they sense something is a little off."

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# Taking the reins in the Canadian wilderness

By Claire Inkson

[claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Two young farmers have embarked on the adventure of a lifetime, leaving the green pastures of rural Southland to work cattle on horseback in Canada's western province of British Columbia.

Thalia Dean (23) and Janaya Anderton (21) met while working on neighbouring farms near Alexandra.

Thalia grew up on a deer farm near Te Anau and studied at Lincoln University, completing a Diploma in Agriculture after a gap year in Australia, before working as a shepherd on a farm near Alexandra.

Janaya grew up on a thoroughbred racing stable near Mosgiel before heading to Scotland to work for three months, coming home to complete a course in high-country farming.

Janaya then took up a position at the farm next door to Thalia, and the two met, discovering they both had a love for horses and a taste for adventure.

In April, they set out for Canada

with no work lined up, but a handful of contacts and a clear idea of the job they wanted: To work stock on horses on an authentic Canadian ranch.

They landed their first job on a ranch south of Calgary that doubled as a movie location.

While a good starting point, it didn't tick all the boxes.

"We were told the ranch had some cows and horses but also did Western movies," Thalia says.

"We are both pretty keen on stock work and horses, but we weren't able to ride horses much, and we didn't really get to do anything with cows."

With most of the work centred around filmmaking, the pair spent most of their time moving props on the film set.

While this was a novelty at first, they got bored after a month and decided to move on, buying a car and going on a road trip around southern Alberta.

"We bought a car in Calgary and drove around for a while, and then we found a job in a horse trekking place through one of my friends back home."

"She used to work there and was over here on holiday, so she



Janaya Anderton and Thalia Dean were determined to find a job that involved horses and cattle, and weren't going to settle for anything less.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

put in a good word for us.

"So we ended up getting that job, which was south of Calgary again, next to the Rocky Mountains."

The pair stayed at that job for a month before deciding it wasn't what they were looking for.

"We love horses, but we were just teaching people to ride every day."

"We wanted to be out there riding a horse with cows," Thalia said.

Determined to stick to their plan, they finally found their

dream job at Danes Ranch in the Chilcoltin district in British Columbia, through a stock agent.

The ranch is owned by Cordy Cox, who took over the farm from her family in 2007.

Dane Ranch runs around 1200 mainly Angus-cross cattle, and with horses being an essential part of daily farm life, Thalia and Janaya were in their element.

"The most amazing part for me is when you are in the mountains riding behind cows on a horse."

"Everything is so picture perfect; the mountains look like they're out of a photo."

A three-hour drive from the nearest city, Williams Lake, the ranch is in vast and remote country, where farmland and wilderness meet under endless skies and rocky mountain ranges.

"It's pretty crazy in a sense being that far away from anything," Janaya said.

Opportunities to socialise off-ranch are few and far between, a far cry from the rural social scene in New Zealand.

"I miss the Young Farmers' meetings, going to the pub and seeing everyone from around the area," Thalia said.

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Dane Ranch is a three-hour drive from the nearest city.



Most work on Dane Ranch is done on horseback, cowboy style.



The ranch runs around 1200 cattle.

"They don't have anything like that for young people to join like you do in rural communities at home."

With the wilderness comes wildlife.

"We haven't seen any bears yet, but we hear wolves howling at night and sometimes see a moose on the side of the road," Janaya said.

"At home, we would run in the morning, but with bears, you just wouldn't do that here."

With 12 staff working on the ranch, Cordy hires accommodation for staff over the

summer months.

For Janaya and Thalia that means a log cabin on the lake, which Janaya describes as "amazing, like being on holiday."

The plan for the next day's work isn't decided until late the night before, and at the moment, hay-making is the main focus.

"We've both had experience driving tractors, and I worked for a contractor back home," Thalia said.

"If it has been raining and we're not making hay, we can ride with the cowboy."

"Because we have had a bit

more experience with horses and stock, we can do more than everyone else."

With women not as involved in agriculture as in New Zealand, the pair have had to prove themselves to gain the respect of other staff.

"The dynamics are different here compared to home; it's kind of a man's world," Thalia explains.

"Once we prove that we can do anything they can do, they are ok."

"It doesn't stop the girls over here, but there is a difference in acceptance, like an old cowboy mentality."

The experience of Canadian agriculture so far has given the pair a renewed respect for New Zealand's primary industry and the pride Kiwi farmers take in their on-farm maintenance.

"It has made us both realise how much we appreciate New Zealand farming."

"The way we farm is so much more efficient than anywhere else I've been."

"I feel like New Zealand is quite a few steps ahead with everything."

Thalia and Janaya plan to stay in Canada for two years and are

hoping to get work in a ski resort over the winter months.

"Our motto for the year is to just play it by ear."

"If we don't like it, we have a car; we can find something else."

While the experience differs entirely from farming in New Zealand, they encourage young farmers who want to take on the challenge to give it a go.

"A lot of people put it in the too-hard basket," Thalia says.

"Go somewhere you want to go and do something you want to do."

"It's so worth it."

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## Helping Arthritic Joints

Most who contact me with joint problems have already tried joint health supplements with little or no success. We make what appear to be minor changes in dosages and within a few months many get significant benefits.

Most joint supplements are heavily weighted towards glucosamine. The main reasons are that most of the original research into joint supplements was focused on glucosamine; secondly, glucosamine is relatively inexpensive while chondroitin is very expensive. I know of one major company that recently reduced chondroitin in their supplement because of cost.

Older style formulations have something like a 4:1 ratio of glucosamine to chondroitin. The most recent research shows that the chondroitin is the most important and



effective joint compound. I find that a 1:1 chondroitin/glucosamine ratio has a huge impact on joint health. It is also worth noting that chondroitin is available as a prescription medication in many European countries. On the basis of modern research, I include a daily dose (2 capsules) of 800mg for both glucosamine and chondroitin and 200mg of the recently released BioSolve® Curcumin extract.

In most cases I start people on a double dose delivering 1600 mg of chondroitin and glucosamine and 400mg of BioSolve® Curcumin.

While research is helpful in understanding disease processes, the real test is to whether something actually works. I spoke to a client yesterday who experienced significant improvements in her thumbs and knee after only 8 weeks on higher doses.

John Arts (B.Soc.Sci, Dip Tch, Adv.Dip.Nut.Med) is a nutritional medicine practitioner and founder of Abundant Health Ltd. For questions or advice contact John on 0800 423559 or email [john@abundant.co.nz](mailto:john@abundant.co.nz). Join his all new newsletter at [www.abundant.co.nz](http://www.abundant.co.nz).



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"My latest Bettaflex formula includes BioSolve® bioavailable curcumin for faster results. The normal dose is 2 capsules daily but I recommend an initial higher dose for 1-3 bottles to saturate joint tissue."

John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

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# Converting silo-naughts, one stay at a time

Silo Stays in Little River is on a mission to convert people into silo-naughts. *SHARON DAVIS* checks out the unique accommodation pods with a nod to rural NZ.



Silo Stays owner operator Rob Fowler at the unique converted silos in Little River on Banks Peninsula. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

By Sharon Davis

A night in a silo is more likely to conjure up thoughts of a mishap in a thriller than a planned holiday, but the retro-fitted silos make for a comfortable night and a unique and memorable stay.

Silo Stays boasts eight two-storey silos in addition to one accessible unit, with easy wheelchair access.

The silos were bought new and fitted out as accommodation units in 2014.

The 8.7m circular structures have wood-lined walls with wool for insulation to keep visitors warm in winter and cool in summer.

Downstairs is an open plan kitchenette with a two-plate stove top, kettle, microwave, small fridge and dining area. The contemporary industrial-chic feel extends to LED lighting and a toolbox drawers for

cutlery, utensils, plates, pots and pans.

Tucked discreetly beneath the circular staircase you'll find the toilet, with a hand basin that feeds into the cistern for the next flush.

Upstairs is a comfortable Queen bed, along with a glass shower and balcony. A rope pulley opens the hatch on a star gazing portal above the bed – and if you tire of looking at the stars there is a TV for entertainment.

It is space-shuttle coloured and the popularity of becoming a silo-naught (spending a night in a silo) is taking off.

Rob Fowler took over Silo Stays from the original owner and designer Stuart Wright-Stow in April 2020 in the middle of lockdown, roughly 10 years after he and his family moved to Little River.

"It is an honour to be allowed to take over the reins," said Rob.

*Continued on P26*

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## From P25

After years working for an international fine wine company, the attraction for Rob was a lifestyle change, while remaining in the leisure and tourism industry – and the ecological nature of the business.

Very little goes to waste at Silo Stays. Tiger worms in a biopod break down most of the waste – including the sewage, toilet paper and food waste – and grey water from the biopod feeds the garden.

A gravity-fed pellet boiler provides hot water and heating and is an attraction itself, with glass panels for a view of the process.

There's little waste, other than what people bring in, said Rob.

Little River used to be a place to stop on the way to Akaroa, but has now become a destination.

"It's made a difference having a good restaurant next door and pub down the road for people to enjoy."

Rob said Silo Stays was the perfect base to explore Banks Peninsula.

The business had developed a number of Silo Stay themed packages in partnerships with others businesses, including the restaurant next door and nearby inn. Others packages include tours to see the Hector's dolphins, local alpacas, and a tour to catch a dawn chorus with local bird enthusiast and photographer Steve Attwood.

"Little River is a wonderful village, in a wonderful valley, on a wonderful peninsula – and hopefully Silo Stays is a wonderful stay."

Rob said there was a lot of satisfaction from seeing people arrive with curious smiles and leave with a satisfied smile.



The interior of the silos.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

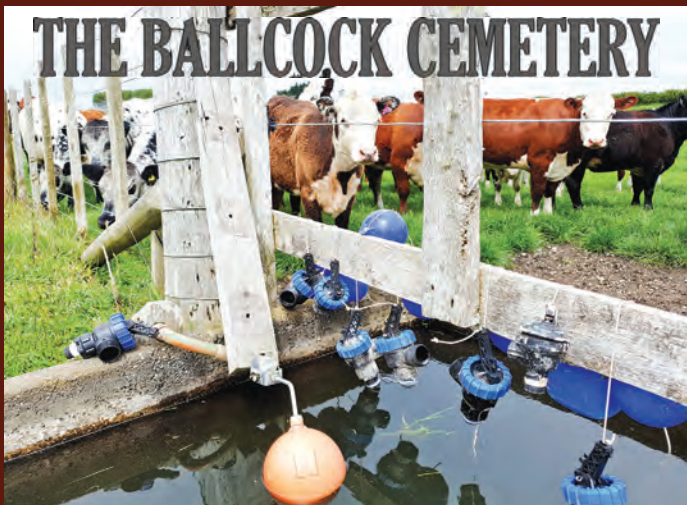


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"Utilise more of the pasture you're already growing, and you'll not only rein in costs but potentially lift production. It's a win-win, especially when budgets are stretched thin. And it's free."

Blair Cotching, pasture systems manager for Barenbrug, says even small gains in utilisation can benefit the bottom line for all farmers.

"It's something you can do yourself, your animals will happily lend a hand (or mouth!), and it will give you back a feeling of control and direction at a time of financial uncertainty."

Some pasture always goes uneaten. But this year he encourages farmers to focus on leaving behind a little bit less, by getting animals to harvest a bit more from each grazing.

"What would a 5-10% increase in utilisation add up to over a year? How much might you save on supplements, without compromising production? And how would your animals perform?"

One of the most under-

estimated gains from improved utilisation is higher pasture quality, so it doesn't just help build financial resiliency.

"You also feed your animals better, and they waste no time transforming that extra metabolisable energy into milk, meat and growth."

One rule stands above all others when it comes to feeding animals well on pasture for around 10-20c/kilogram of dry matter: Graze every pasture at the right stage, to the right height, every time (weather permitting), all year.

Master this, and utilisation will climb, he says, because each paddock will then be perfectly primed to grow and re-grow to its best.

So what's the best way to hit this grazing sweet spot?

Every farm is different, but every pasture loves consistency. Whether it's 4 cm, 5 cm or 6 cm, pick a post-grazing residual target that suits your system, and stick to it all year, Blair says.

"Make sure everyone on your team who moves animals off a paddock knows it too."

Weather and daily pasture growth rates will interfere with your post-grazing residual goal



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The key to success is to get back on track as fast as possible after any disruptions, and use other

tactics as needed.

In spring, for example, when grass often grows faster than animals can eat it, harvest light cuts of high quality silage or take pasture out of

rotation for crop or renewal.

"That way you can keep the rest of the farm on target."

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# Where the rivers rule

By Claire Inkson

[claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Scott and Rachel Paterson have managed Mt Albert Station, a 12,500-hectare property at the headwaters of Lake Wanaka near Makarora, for fifteen years.

During that time, they have considerably improved the farming operation, covering everything from genetics and pasture management to water quality and biodiversity.

Learning to work with the land and the climate has been crucial to the station's success.

"The biggest challenge is the rivers; they definitely rule your life," Scott Paterson says.

Four major waterways run through the property – the Makarora River, Wilkin River, Young River and Albert Burn River.

High annual rainfall can mean the station has a tendency for low land flooding, which Paterson says is determined by the lake levels.

"If the lake is nice and low, the rivers get away quickly."

Higher lake levels coupled with the annual 2.5-metre rainfall can create challenges, which has meant the family jet boat becomes the farm vehicle of choice.

"The rivers can be challenging to get

back and forth across.

"We spend a fair bit of time in the jet boat going up rivers and checking stock.

"Then everyone wants to go jet boating at the weekend, and by then, we've usually had enough," Paterson laughs.

The Patersons are members of The Wanaka Catchment Group, which was established in 2017 to respond to the desire of local farmers to learn more about their farmland's effect on water quality and what they can do to protect their local water bodies, including Lake Wanaka.

Rachel is heavily involved in the group and sits on the catchment board.

"The challenge is engaging the wider community so everyone has a better understanding of the rural impacts on our waterways and what we have been doing and are doing about it," Paterson said.

The Patersons have fenced off a considerable stretch of the waterways running through the property and planted around 15 hectares in natives.

Paterson says having policies that are sustainable and suit the environment is vital.

"We have always tried to improve how the business is run and make it more sustainable.

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Scott Paterson says the biggest challenge of farming Mt Albert Station is the four waterways that run through the property.



Scott and Rachel Paterson have managed Mt Albert station for 15 years. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



The Patersons' jet boat is an unlikely but useful farm vehicle.

"We were looking at these options well before the regulations came through, and it was publicised."

The operation is 50/50 sheep and beef, running Headwaters ewes and Angus cattle, which are supplied to Anzco and Alliance.

"The owner has invested heavily in Angus genetics over the last seven years, leading to increased fertility, carcass weights, and eating quality."

Angus' genetics are from Te Mania, Taimate, Twin Oaks and Stern, with the station previously running Herefords.

Perendales have been replaced by Headwater ewes, bred with high-fat levels, to thrive in the high country with high fertility and resilience.

The winter season is long at Mt Albert Station, averaging around 120 days, which means late spring growth.

"We put 100 hectares in of HT swedes and kale to carry capital stock, ewes, replacement hoggets, and steer and heifer calves through the winter."

"It's all supplemented with silage and biallage, which is also grown on-farm."

The switch to Optimise fertiliser has suited the high rainfall on the property.

Optimise is fine lime pressed into a pellet form for ease of transport

and application, manufactured in New Zealand by CP Lime.

Paterson trialled the product on 140 hectares and was impressed with the results and the level of service.

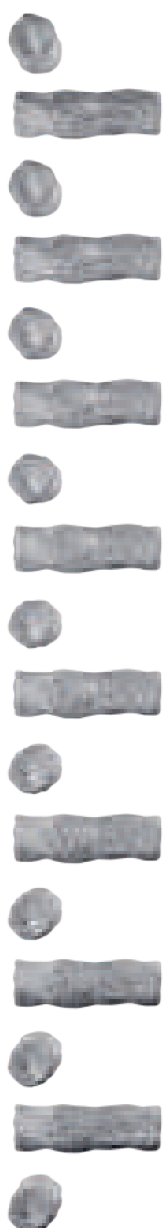
"We initially changed to Optimise because of the people behind the product," Paterson explains.

"It's helped improve our soil structure, and our soils are healthier. We are getting higher yields

and quality in our pastures and brassicas."

The challenge with Mt Albert Station is that no day is the same, but Paterson has found that being organised, watching the weather patterns and respecting the environment and the waterways have been key to a successful farm business.

"It's about being proactive, not reactive, and doing the basics and doing them right."



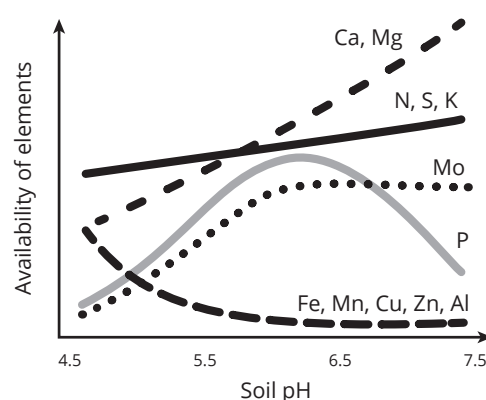
## How to tune the performance of your soil

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The availability of essential nutrients like phosphorus, sulphur, nitrogen, potassium, calcium, and magnesium depends on the soil pH. A neutral pH often ensures a well-balanced uptake of these nutrients, promoting healthier plant growth.



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## Topping up when your soil is deficient

Look out for signs that your soil health is lacking. The number of earthworms,

the structure of the soil and how it drains are good indicators of soil health. If you're seeing a lack of clovers, that could mean you lack Potassium (K).

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# Young Farmer spotlight

This month we talk to **Nick Blom**

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

Balfour Young Farmers, three years (since the club got back up and running again)

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

The best experience has been realising that there are actually a lot of young people in the area, that are wanting to engage in

social activities. It's really cool to be a part of reinvigorating the club to be able to accommodate that.

**3. How did you become involved in agriculture?**

I grew up on a farm and never wanted to do anything else! I went travelling and worked on different farms overseas after a year at university, which made me realise that New Zealand is the best place to be a farmer.

**4. What is your job now? Tell us about your role, and what your journey has been like so far.**

This year is my first year of contract milking with my wife in Balfour, northern Southland. We milk 580 cows on 208ha. This farm is owned by my parents. Once I returned from overseas, I managed this farm for four seasons before progressing to contract milking.

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

I think that the future of farming is going to see more efficiencies, i.e. more solids per cow, grow lambs out faster, through better genetic gain and more skilful feeding knowledge. Also, technology will hopefully become more affordable to everyone which can help pick the top 10% of efficiencies that we can't see as quickly.

Going forward I hope that we can still have profitable farming businesses on smaller blocks, rather than having to be large-scale factory farmers.

Quality should always beat quantity, so hopefully people long into the future view farming as a passionate lifestyle, rather than just a job.

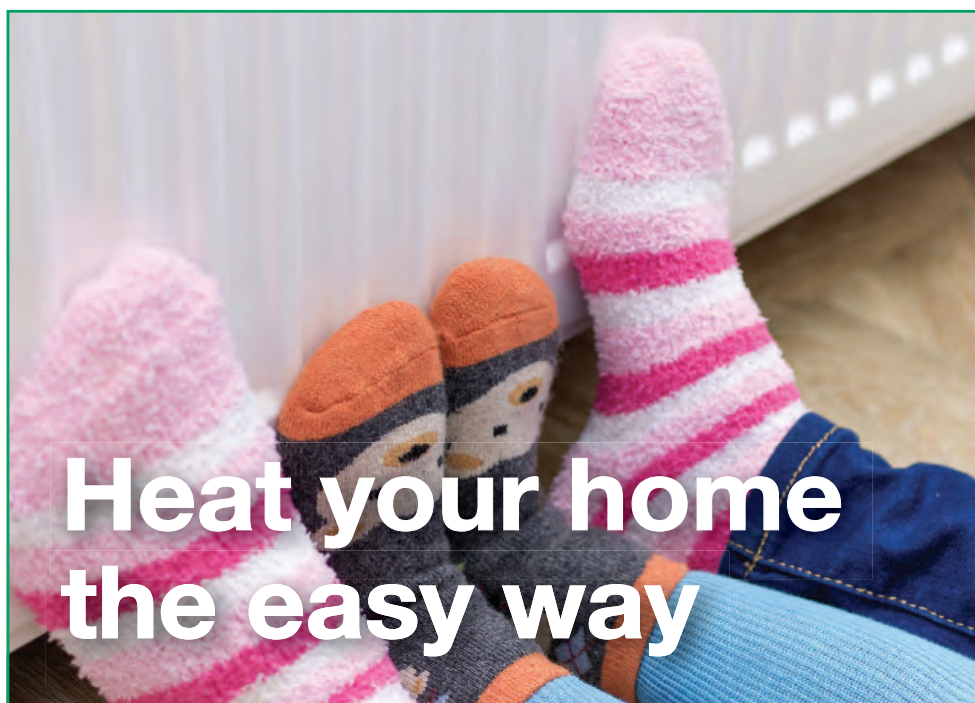
**6. What are your future plans?**

Keep milking cows and create efficiencies by adding value to our milk rather than getting larger (in terms of land area and cow numbers). We would love to start a small cheese-making business on farm to provide a quality product, and connect the consumers to what good looks like in the dairy industry. Farm ownership of the place we are on now, is definitely the end-goal we are chipping away on in the background.

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

My old man and my mum.

They've given me an amazing opportunity and got the balance right of letting me make my own mistakes but also only being a phone call away if I need it. They've set a good example of what working together as a good team looks like.



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Nick Blom taking time to relax.

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# Milk payouts fall below cost

By Sharon Davis

The country's leading milk processor has slashed its farm gate milk price for the coming season twice in two weeks.

Fonterra has put a further squeeze on dairy farmers, cutting its forecast milk payment as demand from China remains weak.

The forecast price for the 2023/24 season has since dropped by \$1.25/kgms and means many local dairy farmers could be operating at a loss.

Fonterra's new forecast range is down more than 15% to an average of \$6.75 for a kilogram of milk solids (kgms), down from a midpoint forecast of \$8/kgms at the start of August.

Chief executive Miles Hurrell said the earlier forecast was based on an expectation that Chinese demand would improve over the medium term.

China still had a surplus of fresh milk with elevated levels of local production of whole milk powder. This had reduce its milk powder import requirements. However, Hurrell was still optimistic about the outlook for the dairy industry.

"The medium to long-term outlook for dairy, in particular New Zealand dairy, looks positive with milk production from key exporting regions flat compared to last year," he said.



Fonterra has put a further squeeze on dairy farmers by cutting the forecast milk payment.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

DairyNZ farm performance general manager Sarah Speight said the decrease in the forecast milk price, alongside higher farm costs will see many farmers take a more cautious approach.

"A decrease in forecast milk prices of this amount, if it eventuates, will see farmers reducing on-farm spending - creating flow-on implications for the wider New Zealand economy."

If costs stay this high, there is a risk of significant cash loss for many dairy farmers, Speight said.

"We know from experience that farmers rein in their expenditure, to minimise cash losses."

Farmers would need to cut costs and pause non-essential capital projects.

However, changes would need to be thought through and not have long-term effects on profit, or the wellbeing of staff or animals, she said.

"Dairy farmers are known for their resilience, but that doesn't make coping during challenging times any easier.

Federated Farmers national dairy chair Richard McIntyre said the drop in Fonterra's forecast price would be a bitter pill to swallow for farmers who were already under significant pressure.

"Two weeks ago, farmers were looking at a midpoint of \$8/kgms, but things have rapidly deteriorated and we're now looking at \$6.75. That's a significant drop," he said.

DairyNZ's updated national average breakeven figure for

the season is \$7.51, excluding principal repayments on debt.

"That means that, on average, farmers will be losing at least 76 cents on every kgms they produce this season.

"The psychological impact of that for dairy farmers, who are in the thick of calving and working long hours in the elements, can't be underestimated," McIntyre said.

RaboResearch agricultural analyst Emma Higgins said farm costs had increased by 13% over the last year.

Interest rates had jumped by 50%, while fertiliser and dairy shed expenses were both up 11%, and insurance premiums had increased by 9%. In contrast, Fonterra's farmgate forecast midpoint had dropped 11% over the same period.

While the global milk market was weak, Higgins did not expect a super-cycle downturn.

Global dairy prices plummeted to a near five-year low in the Global Dairy Trade auction on August 15.

The average price fell 7.4% to US\$2875 a tonne.

However, the whole milk powder price - which tends to influence the payout for New Zealand farmers - dropped by 10.9% to US\$2875.

The prices for skim milk powder fell 5.2% and butter prices were down 3%.



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# Adjuvants are undervalued

With spray programmes about to kick off, it's a good time to look at ways to maximise ROI.

Adjuvants are an affordable way to boost, and manage, spray programmes. Yet they often fly under farmers' and growers' radars.

That's according to UPL NZ Ltd.'s Adjuvant Product Manager, David Lingan. A passionate advocate of the products, David says adjuvants are undervalued. "Adjuvants don't have an active aspect. But what they do is help extract every last cent of value from the herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides you use. They give a great return on investment."

David says that begins at spray-out.

He says this critical stage, pre-crop establishment can be a deal-breaker for the next crop. Traditionally, non-selective herbicides - glyphosate and glufosinates - are applied to kill the previous crop and clean out weeds, reducing competition for the in-coming seedlings.

David says, using an adjuvant can make the process even more effective.

"Naturally, you always want the best outcome from what you're doing on the land. If you're spraying-out, pre-planting, with non-selective herbicides, then adjuvant Unison® delivers drift control, along with providing the enhanced deposition, retention,

and penetration you need."

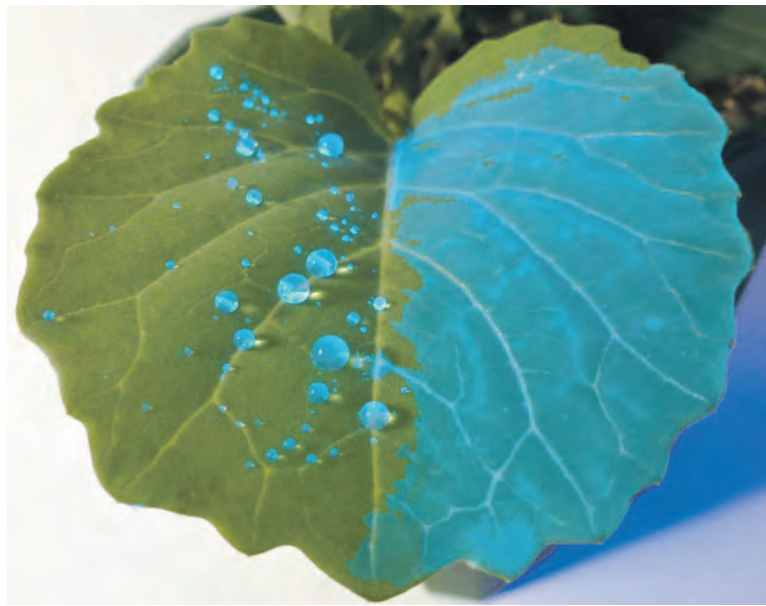
David says the low foaming, non-petroleum-based product is a unique patented formulation - a blend of soybean oil ethoxylate and extract from pine tree stumps. "It helps the sprays to be absorbed through the natural pathways by opening the waxy and hairy cuticle of plants, that's rather than damaging them, which slows down uptake. With Unison, the uptake into the plant is excellent.

"Unison also helps reduce the risk of re-sprays. No-one wants to be doing things twice or holding up cultivation and re-sowing and incurring extra costs."

In addition, David says, the ability to manage spray drift effectively not only means less waste, it also avoids posing an environmental hazard or potentially threatening adjacent crops and plants.

"Ensuring non-selective herbicides land exactly on the target is part of running a good business, carrying out good land stewardship, and being a good neighbour."

While adjuvants are a very broad category, sustainable agricultural product provider UPL have it covered. Previously Elliott Chemicals Limited, they began work on adjuvants in this country more than two decades ago. Today, they are industry leaders



A cabbage leaf showing water plus Du-Wett super spreader. Adding a spreader makes every droplet count.

with a portfolio of 22 proven adjuvant products - each with its own job to do.

"The ability to get sprays 'to, on and in' are what adjuvants bring to the spray application," David says. "They've got a lot to contribute. Their clever science can improve effectiveness of sprays and add benefits."

Perhaps the best known, and most widely used adjuvant, is the super spreader Du-Wett®. David explains water, which

makes up to 90% of sprays, has a high surface tension. "It doesn't give you real spread or coverage. Adding a spreader will definitely enhance the product's performance. It makes every droplet count."

There are other financial benefits too.

"Du-Wett has a significant impact in terms of time and cost-savings because it can be used at a much-reduced water application volume. That way,

spraying is completed faster. Tank filling and travelling times are cut, especially if you're travelling between blocks, and diesel and labour expenses decrease.

"It more than pays for itself."

An adjuvant important to spray hygiene, is All Clear® 2X tank cleaner and decontaminator. This removes even sticky products such as carfentrazone (e.g., Clout®) from spray units.

David says All Clear 2X is cheap insurance against accidental cross-contamination and mistakes. "Getting your spray equipment cleaned, and fully decontaminated prior to the start of the spraying season, should be part of a regular maintenance programme." Using All Clear 2X between spray products is also recommended.

David says "hard" water is another potential factor in spray efficacy that an adjuvant can tackle.

"People often forget that water is actually an active chemical (H<sub>2</sub>O). Some chemicals, including glyphosates, are very susceptible to the effect of "hard" water. The positively charged cations in calcium, magnesium, iron etc. bind to the negatively charged glyphosate molecule. This slows up-take, reduces solubility, and can precipitate out of the solution, reducing the efficiency of glyphosate (in particular)."

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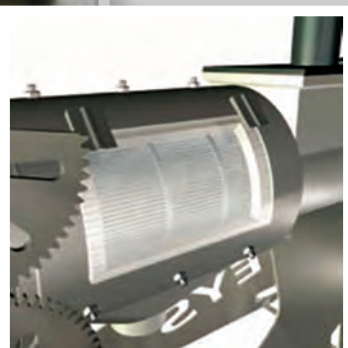
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# M. Bovis now under control?

By Sharon Davis

New Zealand has been declared Mycoplasma bovis free again.

Biosecurity and Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor announced the milestone in August as New Zealand moves closer to being the first country in the world to eradicate the disease.

The last known infected property in Mid-Canterbury has been destocked and declared disease-free, taking New Zealand to zero confirmed infections.

O'Connor said five years of hard work, sacrifice, and collaboration with MPI, DairyNZ and Beef+Lamb had brought New Zealand to this milestone on the road to eradication.

"I want to acknowledge the hardship which affected farmers and families have felt during this time. I also want to thank the broader sector who've stepped up their animal tracing efforts, allowing us to move the programme on to a new surveillance phase."

The eradication effort cost an estimated \$1.3 billion in lost production in the first ten years alone, he said.

"At the height of the programme there was a peak of 40 infected properties across the country and today we have none."

"While we've had brief periods in the past where we had no infections, we still had possible cases being investigated."

This is the first time we've had no cases and no investigations.

"We can't say yet that we've reached eradication as we may still detect new cases in the future, however with no confirmed infection from our background surveillance since April 2022, we can be confident that we are moving in the right direction."

A total of 280 farms had been depopulated with almost 184,000 cattle culled. Nearly 3000 farms has been subject to movement controls and many more had undergone on-farm testing, the programme has touched nearly every farming community across the country.

O'Connor said the next step would be a move to a national pest management plan – similar to that used for bovine tuberculosis control.

Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford said New Zealand had reached a significant milestone in its efforts to eradicate the disease.

He said Federated Farmers was cautiously optimistic. However, farmers could not be certain that New Zealand had "turned the corner" until bulk milk testing ramps up again in spring.

"We've been able to get to this point through the joint efforts of our farmers and rural communities, and a strong partnership between the primary sector and government."



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PHOTO: SUPPLIED

## Grassroots seeks new graduates

Applications are open for the 2024 Grassroots Dairy Management Programme.

The programme aims to give recent graduates the skills to fast track their progression into management and decision-making positions in the dairy industry.

Participants will complete 25 modules covering everything from pasture management to environmental compliance between February and November next year.

While dairy experience isn't necessary, applicants will need to have completed the requirements of their university degree within the last three years, be entitled to stay in NZ indefinitely, and be ready to join the workforce in a full-time capacity.

The programme will assist graduates to find employment on a supportive dairy farm if necessary.

Graduates can apply online at [www.dairygrads.co.nz](http://www.dairygrads.co.nz).

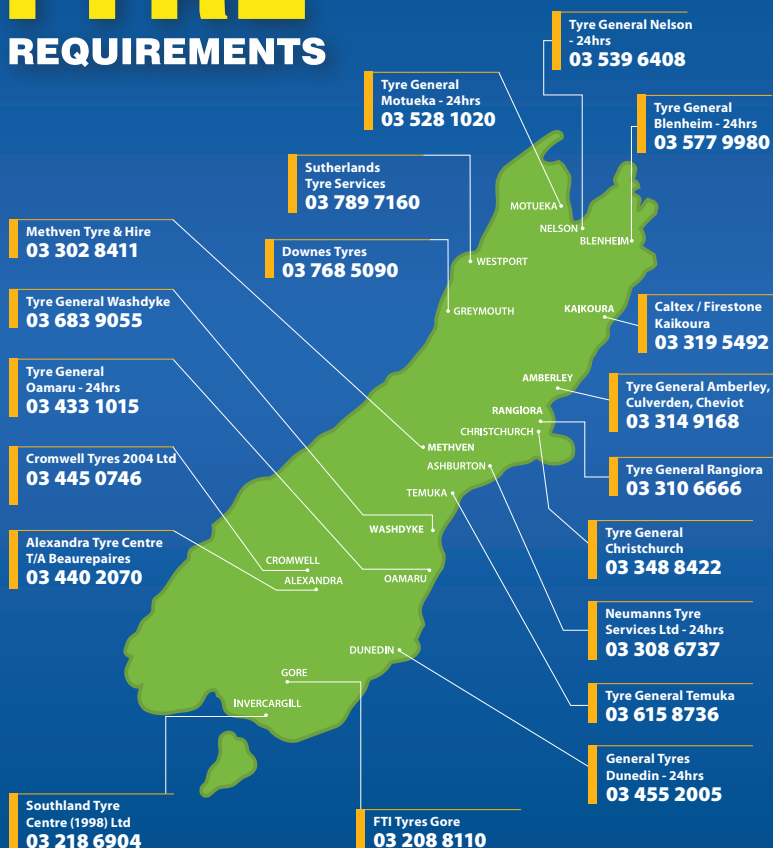
## Little Country

Farm kid of the month



Little dairy farmer Daisy Barraclough, age 6, from Clydevale, Otago

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## Bum needed on the seat

I recently received a call from a reporter wanting my opinion on electric tractors. She had come to the right place, because what I lack in electric tractors I certainly make up in opinions.

I am no stranger to the idea of electric vehicles on farm, having invested in an electric motorbike last season. I made the purchase for safety reasons; the rider is slight of stature and struggled with the more common petrol-powered bike I provided her with. The electric bike, being lower to the ground and significantly lighter with a step through frame proved a hit, and she whizzed around the farm easily on the new workhorse.

Thirteen months and three warranty claims later, I regret the decision. The experience hasn't put me off electrification, the concept is sound and the issues I experienced could be put down to poor execution in design rather than the fact it was powered by a battery, but it certainly has made me wary of being an early adopter.

The tractor I was asked about had been purchased by Cromwell cherry farmer Mike Casey. Coming in at around \$200,000 to land in New Zealand from the United States, the 50hp equivalent electric tractor is well outside of my budget, especially after the recent drop in the dairy payout. Full credit to Casey for getting the government and



A Monarch electric tractor was bought recently by Cromwell cherry farmer Mike Casey.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

related eco organisations to foot a good chunk of his bill though. The entrepreneur from Wellington has been very clever to make the system work for him, but I doubt it's an option available to most farmers.

Casey is using the tractor on his cherry orchard, and the two main benefits he sees from using it are fuel savings and the automation of repetitive tasks, as the tractor can be programmed to operate autonomously without a driver.

For me his second point is the more interesting one and leads me to conclude that electric tractors, in the context of dairy farming, are a made-up solution looking for a problem that never existed. Having spent nearly 30 years in the industry I know that any tractor on a dairy farm needs a bum on the seat to operate it. A cherry orchard has uniform rows of evenly spaced trees with little in the way of obstacles, whereas a dairy farm has gates to open,

cows to avoid, boggy patches to navigate and a myriad of other obstacles to be considered that simply require a pair of human eyes and, often, a driver to get out of that tractor to deal with.

That's not to say repetitive tasks on a dairy farm can't be automated, they can and have been for many years. Automatic cup removers and teat sprayers have semi-automated milking, robots can fully automate milking if you really want to take

that next step. Many of us are taking up these electric powered modifications with enthusiasm.

For example, in-shed feeding achieves much the same as an electric tractor but at a fraction of the cost: a monotonous task is automated and the workload taken over by grain silos and electric augers rather than a diesel powered tractor and a silage wagon.

Until the cost of this electric vehicle technology comes down, an electric tractor is out of the question on most farms, and unsuitable for most farmers' wallets. You can buy an awful lot of diesel for the premium price one of those machines fetches, and the savings in any industry come from minimising wastage and reducing labour costs; be those cup removers, in-shed feeding or automatic drafting.

Farmers are open to change, technological advances and cutting down on waste and emissions. In fact, it is an industry that has often led the way on all of the above. So, while ideas, entrepreneurial tech electric tractors and the like look good from afar, it is important we investigate the practicality, costs and general usefulness for the farmers they wish to be using them.

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# Drive impression – Toyota Hilux GR Sport is a top ute

By Duncan Humm, NZ Farming

We were desperately hoping to get a hold of the GR Sport to compare against the other class leading utes you may have read about in a previous issue of Rural Guardian, but this new version of the Hilux hadn't quite landed here in New Zealand. But when I did get the GR Hilux it was good to have the SR5 Cruiser that we drove on the previous test fresh in my mind as a yard stick.

For those unfamiliar with what the GR badge on a Toyota represents, GAZOO Racing is the in-house performance division that primarily builds race cars for specialist events across the world, in the case of Hilux it's closest race pedigree are trucks built to take on the gruelling Dakar Rally, so that toughness and reliability trickles down to be applied to the engine and suspension, improvements that are quite noticeable with the GR Hilux.

Much like before I drove the current generation Hilux when it was launched back in 2020, I wasn't expecting a huge difference from the previous

model with, on paper, only 10% more power squeezed from the existing engine.

But as we found out, putting it side-by-side against the previous model, it was profoundly better. This time around it's the same again, on paper the gap between other models isn't huge, but torque and power figures put it in the same ballpark as other utes in its class.

As soon as I left Ashburton Toyota I was instantly impressed with how responsive it felt.

Once out in the country and on the roads I'm familiar with, I was also pleased with how well it drove, particularly once I got onto harsher shingle roads where the older Hiluxs aren't renowned for a smooth ride.

That isn't necessarily a bad thing, remembering they're a ute set up for people that load them up and go places to do things off road, more than saunter around the roads of Merivale!

Engine-wise Toyota have used a larger turbo and revised the fuel injection control to get 165kw and 550Nm torque out of their 2.8L diesel engine, while there was talk of a new V6 engine for the GR before it came.



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- Contour XL equipped with bigger, more effective, 610mm discs. Raised frame for optimum soil flow.
- Available in both trailed and threepoint linkage. Range of roller options. Working widths from 2.5-8m.



6M KARAT 9 IN STOCK - POA

### LEMKEN KARAT 9 CULTIVATOR

- Flexibility of primary tillage, seedbed preparation, deep mixing and ripping in one machine.
- Integrated levelling discs leave a smooth, even finish.
- Traction enhancement system reducing both slippage and fuel consumption.
- Optional heavy rollers.
- Individual tine protection.
- Available in mounted, rigid or folding; and semi-mounted, folding in working widths of 3-7m.



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The decision by Toyota to go with a proven reliable engine appears to be a smart direction to be going in.

We're already seeing that back-to-the-future approach with the announcement of the new Prado that will be coming with a 2.8L engine, but with the modern twist of some added electric hybrid tech mated up with it that should be the best of both worlds.

Total fuel consumption while I had the GR Sport was 11.3L/100km.

Handling is really good by way of an automatic limited slip differential and traction control along with GR shock absorbers and suspension tuning.

Brakes are 338mm vented discs on front & rear, with cool GR red callipers, which felt they'd have all the stopping power you'd need, even when towing close to its 3500kg limit.

I noticed on shingle roads the traction control really worked well. Often I take over, turning traction control off, but not with the Hilux.

Since I only had the GR Hilux for a short time, I didn't get to do much off road to really test the suspension, however what I did do, with a short deviation into the riverbed on the way home, it felt like it handles very well through articulations and was sure-footed on uneven terrain.

Price wise the Hilux GR Sport comes in just under \$80,000 which is competitive against similar spec models in the class and, given the enhancements by GAZOO Racing, is well worth considering.

My nine-year-old daughter insisted I should get one, for the red seatbelts alone!



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**\$69,995\***

### Kverneland DXP 4.5m



Very tidy, ready for work.

**\$19,500\***

### Bredal B2



Recently refurbished. Spread certification. Very tidy.

**\$11,500\***

### Claydon V3.45 Drill



Strip Tillage Drill. 2005 model. Very tidy condition.

**\$19,995\***

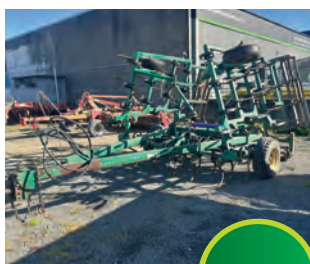
### Househam Merlin Mk2



4000L tank, 24m boom. Auto steer, auto section control. 2018 model. Fully serviced. Very tidy.

**\$225,000\***

### Hubbard's Maxi 310



6m cultivator. Rear crumbles in excellent order. Very tidy machine.

**\$15,995\***

### HE-VA Disc Roller Contour series



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5.5M DISC ROLLER IN STOCK - POA

### HE-VA Combi Tiller 4m



MK1 model. 4m folding. New points to be fitted.

**\$14,995\***

### Bogballe M2 Plus



2014 model. Spread test certificate. Very tidy.

**\$15,995\***

### HE-VA Disc Roller Contour 6.5m



2016 model. Farmer owned. Workshop Serviced. New discs fitted.

**\$69,995\***



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\*Excludes GST



# Raising hoof care standards

By Sharon Davis

Hoof health for dairy herds should get more focus, says hoof care specialist Fred Hoekstra.

Lameness ranked in the top three for bovine health issues on dairy farms in New Zealand.

It costs the industry millions of dollars each year, he said.

"Lame cows don't walk well, don't eat well, and don't produce well."

It is both an animal welfare issue and an economic issue for farmers.

"Nobody benefits from lame cows – and that includes hoof trimmers."

Hoekstra, a qualified hoof trimmer and instructor in the Dutch trimming method, came to New Zealand 32 years ago.

Cattle hoof trimming was well known in Europe at the time. But there were no professional hoof trimmers in New Zealand back then, Hoekstra said.

He saw a gap and set up Veehof, eventually settling in Mid Canterbury with his wife, Sandy, offering hoof trimming services and products.

Since then, his track record helped build up rapport and trust with farmers to the point where Veehof has 20 to 25 hoof trimmers working throughout New Zealand. Most have been trained by Hoekstra.

"Cows in New Zealand do not spend as much time on concrete and do not need to be regularly trimmed like they do in Europe and USA."

Hoekstra said catching lameness before it became obviously painful was the most effective option for New Zealand herds.

"Preventative trimming is more cost-effective than curing lameness, which includes treatment costs and a loss in milk yields."

Monitoring the locomotion of the herd over time was the best way to identify issues before they become a problem.

Trimming helped to redistribute the weight of the cow. However, there was more to hoof health than trimming, he said.

The cow's diet affected the health of the live tissue within the hoof.

Hoekstra said many cows in New Zealand were underfed.

"This isn't the same as starved – and seems to be the New Zealand practice."

Another contributor to lameness was the lack of time cows had to rest, relax, socialise and ruminate in the pasture.

Farmers who ran large mobs of cattle for efficiency put their cows under extra stress, Hoekstra said.

"Cows should ideally spend between 20 and 22 hours on pasture. But most cows in New Zealand spent much less time in



Fred Hoekstra shows how good hoof trimming is done.

the paddock."

It could take an hour to get the herd to the shed, an hour-and-a-half to milk the mob, and another hour to turn them out again. This happened twice a day and added up, Hoekstra said.

Hoekstra said hoof trimmers were usually called in when a lame cow was struggling to walk and were seen as "the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff".

He said early detection and early response – effectively utilising



Hoof care training is delivered through the Dairy Hoof Care Institute.

hoof trimmers as a barrier at the top of the cliff – is far more cost-effective for farmers.

In 2019 the Hoekstras set up the Dairy Hoof Care Institute to raise the standard of hoof care in New Zealand. They offer certified training in partnership with Dutch-based Dairy Training Centre and Utrecht University.

They offer a one-day

introductory course on hoof health and trimming and an intensive course with an initial five-day course, with three refresher days and the option to take an exam to get an internationally recognised diploma.

Hoekstra also teaches his hoof-trimming method to veterinary students for Massey University.



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# Halter leads the way in pasture management



Halter has once again levelled up the farming tech space by adding the new Pasture Pro system to Halter's dairy farmer toolbox, which is shaping up to be the most exciting technology to cross the farm gate in decades.

Farmers using Halter's virtual fencing system can now reap the benefits of the first-ever end-to-end system to help farmers grow and harvest more grass.

"The point of the Pasture Pro system is to allow farmers to harvest more grass, which is the core driver of profitability across every farm," Halter partnership manager Steve Crowhurst says.

#### How it works

For farmers to run a profitable operation, optimal pasture harvest is key.

Pasture Pro works within the Halter app, building on Halter's ground-breaking virtual fencing technology that uses cow collars to allow farmers to move animals without the constraints of traditional fences, as well as monitor cow health and manage pasture.

Pasture Pro builds on Halter's existing capabilities to allow farmers to allocate the optimal amount of pasture at the ideal leaf



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

stage, using satellite imagery, collar data from grazing events, residual data from images captured on a farmer's phone, localised weather data, plus regional and seasonal pasture growth rates.

Pasture cover and growth rates are automatically updated in Pasture Pro daily, giving farmers up-to-date and accurate information so they can make the best decisions to get the most from their pasture, right down to individual paddocks.

And, the more you use the Pasture Pro system, the more accurate it becomes as Halter's machine learning model gets to know your specific farm.

#### Photo-based residual assessment

Using the camera on their phone, anyone working on the farm can photograph a recently grazed paddock and get accurate and up-to-date information on the paddock's post-grazing residuals.

"It automatically updates residuals with your phone, and

it's super easy and accurate," Crowhurst said.

"You don't have to download or upload the photos. You just take the picture, and that's the only data entry.

"It feeds straight into the app, providing insights to farmers about whether they are hitting the right residuals."

#### Leaf Emergence Rates

Pasture Pro provides estimates using equations proven from years of research by New Zealand

and Australian pasture experts and also takes into account local temperature data specific to your farm each day to calculate daily leaf emergence rates.

This allows farmers to be able to graze closer to 'third leaf stage', which Crowhurst describes as the 'sweet spot', allowing farmers to increase yield and maximise quality.

"Farmers just haven't had that information in their hands in real-time before."

#### A game-changer

Crowhurst said feedback from farmers had been positive, as market volatility saw farmers needing to run their farms as efficiently and profitably as possible.

"Halter provides benefits around labour issues and time management, and Pasture Pro focuses on grass and how that builds a resilient dairy farming business.

"It's undeniable that grass is so important, and the feedback we have had since we released it to our farmers has been pretty humbling.

"It's great to see that feedback come back and how excited they are."