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FEBRUARY 2024

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WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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- No more than 100 words.
- We reserve the right to edit or not publish.
- Send all letters to: claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz



Salute to an industry

2023 was a tough year to be in agriculture.

On-farm inflation, low commodity prices, high-interest rates, increasing regulation and the ongoing devastation of severe weather events have made it a challenging year to be a farmer.

That's why it's all the more important to find ways to celebrate our sector, and the reinstatement of National Lamb Day on February 15 is an excellent way to do this.

The team at Ag Proud and Beef + Lamb New Zealand have partnered up to create a day that is so much more than throwing some lamb chops on the BBQ; it is a day to recognise how important the primary sector as a whole is to New Zealand, both economically and culturally.

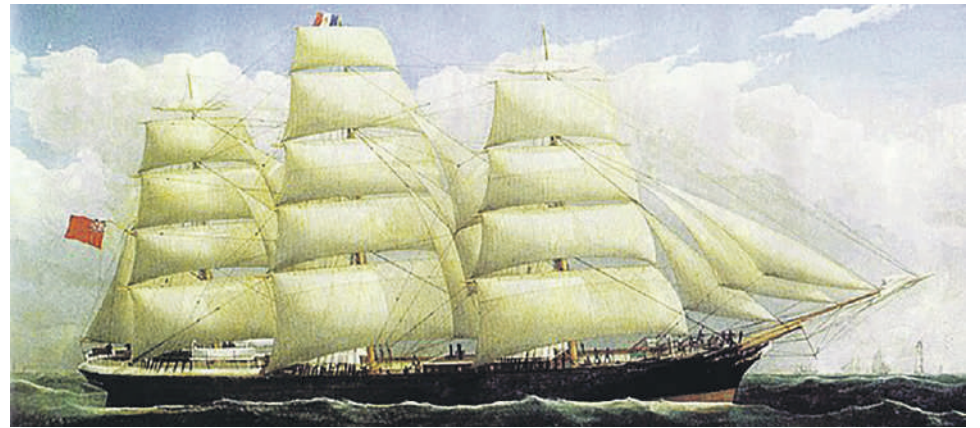
The day SS Dunedin embarked on its journey from Dunedin to London on February 15, 1882, carrying New Zealand's first export shipment of frozen meat, was really the birth of the country's primary export sector.

It is a shining example of the innovative Number 8 wire ethos that has seen New Zealand farmers become some of the best in the world.

William Davidson, the general manager of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, organised the shipment.

He had been observing experimental attempts at frozen shipments and had the foresight to see the new technology as a game changer for Australasian agriculture.

A previous attempt to ship frozen meat from Australia to England had been made



The Dunedin carried the first successful shipment of frozen meat to Britain in 1882.

in 1876 on the Northam, but machinery failure of the cooling plant had meant the shipment was unsuccessful.

Another attempt had been made when beef was shipped from the United States to England.

While it wasn't entirely successful, results were encouraging enough for Davidson to see merit in persevering with the concept.

He oversaw the fitting out of the passenger ship SS Dunedin with a coal-powered Bell Coleman freezing plant.

Its maiden voyage as a meat transportation ship, while not entirely uneventful, arrived in London with only one spoiled carcass.

The voyage paved the way for the frozen meat shipment industry, opening up Northern Hemisphere markets to New

Zealand meat and dairy.

The Dunedin made another nine voyages before disappearing on the Southern Ocean after leaving Oamaru in March 1890.

No trace of the ship was found, and it was assumed that the vessel had struck an iceberg and sunk.

Despite this sad ending, the legacy of that first voyage in 1882 is worth commemorating as symbolic of the contribution farming has made to New Zealand over the past 140 years.

Get behind National Lamb Day this year.

If you can't get to the Southern Field Days to the event's launch, flood social media on February 15 with your barbecue dinners and show how proud we are to be New Zealand farmers.

country 25 YEARS



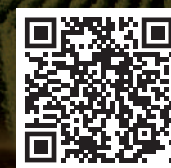
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Lamb Day makes a comeback

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

Charitable farming organisation Ag Proud is looking to reinstate National Lamb Day to New Zealand calendars on the new date of February 15.

The original date of May 24 was chosen as the date the first shipment of New Zealand lamb arrived on British shores aboard the Dunedin in 1882.

February 15 marks the date the Dunedin disembarked from Port Chalmers, which fittingly coincides with this year's Southern Field Days in Waimumu, where the celebration will be re-launched.

Ag Proud chairperson Jon Pemberton says the first lamb export was more than a voyage, but was the start of New Zealand's journey as a global food powerhouse.

"National Lamb Day is our way of honouring this legacy, celebrating our incredible kai, and acknowledging every individual involved in its journey from farm to fork."

Pemberton is encouraging Kiwis to "raise a chop in salute our food champions" and says it doesn't matter what Kiwis throw on the barbecue as long as it's New Zealand-grown food.

"Success would be if social media is swamped with people



Jon Pemberton.

barbecuing New Zealand food."

Pemberton said it doesn't matter if people want to attend lamb day celebrations or do something in their own backyard.

National Lamb Day is a chance for farmers to consider 'left field' opportunities to address the



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

sector's challenges and change how agriculture in New Zealand operates.

"I think there is an opportunity for farmers to realise there have been challenges and sacrifices in the past, and things won't change going forward unless we do things differently."

Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) is getting behind the initiative and supporting Ag Proud's efforts to reinstate National Lamb Day.

B+LNZ chief executive Kit Arkwright said he was pleased to be helping to establish an annual celebration.

"We hope this day can become an enduring yearly celebration of all New Zealand food; whether you are producing it or simply love eating it, you can take a moment to appreciate how delicious New Zealand food and lamb is," Arkwright said.



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Secret of seeds success

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

In 1993, South Pacific Seeds NZ (SPSNZ) managing director John McKay began a journey into the hybrid seed business that would change seed production in New Zealand forever.

A pioneer from the outset, McKay began small-scale hybrid seed production on his farm in Methven, Mid Canterbury.

In partnership with South Pacific Seed Australia, that business has grown to a thriving

enterprise on the outskirts of Methven township.

SPSNZ now employs 58 staff and produces nearly 500 hybrid vegetable seed crops from 230 contracted farmers.

"We grow around 14 types of vegetable seed.

"We try to grow everything we can in New Zealand.

"We can't grow watermelon or cucumber; it's too cold."

Radishes comprise a large portion of seed production, as well as Chinese Cabbage and Bok Choy.

The secret to success is delivering quality, McKay says.

"If you grow a field of wheat, you harvest it and put it in the silo, and if it is really good, someone will buy it straight away.

"If it's a bit weather damaged, someone will buy it later in the season and feed it to their cattle.

"But in the hybrid seed business, if it's not perfect, there is no market."

To ensure quality, SPSNZ has a unique hands-on approach right through the seed production

chain, from planting and harvesting to seed cleaning and sorting.

"We do a bit of land leasing, but that is usually for new varieties or varieties that we know are difficult.

"But nearly all land is owned by the farmer, and we make a contract with the farmer to help them grow the seeds.

"We're quite involved in the process; it's all about not failing."

SPSNZ advises farmers throughout the growing process and can supply specialised

machinery for small and difficult crops.

"When we started nearly 30 years ago, Canterbury farmers didn't have any equipment for row cropping, inter-crop cultivating or inter-row spraying, so we had to get the equipment to do it."

Once harvested, the seed goes through a series of machines that clean, dry, and sort the seed by size and colour.

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Corn Salad seeds are just one of fourteen hybrid vegetable seed varieties South Pacific Seeds NZ Produces.

When so much can go wrong, and with no way to know if a seed is 'good' at the time of purchase, this dedication to quality has allowed SPSNZ to build solid relationships with global export markets.

"That's where trust comes in," McKay said.

The factory floor at SPSNZ is sparkling clean, and the vibe among the workers is efficient and cheerful, an environment McKay has fostered from the



John McKay stands in a field of Chinese Cabbage being grown near Methven.

PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

beginning.

Initially, getting staff in the seed cleaning facility was difficult, as the job had a reputation for being dusty and dirty, but that has changed, McKay said.

"We have some great young people now that are enjoying taking up that challenge and making sure the place is like a hospital, really clean."

"They are doing a good job, and they get to meet customers."

After two years of employment at SPSNZ, staff are invited to have a small shareholding in the company, which gives them a sense of ownership, McKay said.

"I want to make sure everyone has a pleasant job."

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FARMINGFASTFIVE

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

The Farming Fast Five: Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them.

Today we talk to North Otago farmer *GRANT MCNAUGHTON*.

What did your journey into farming look like?

I was born and raised on a farm, which stimulated my interest, following high school I completed a degree at Lincoln University which really ignited my passion for agriculture and the opportunities in the sector.

Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

We are a sheep and beef farming business, close to Oamaru, spread between two properties. The total area is just under 18000 acres, and is based on Angus cattle and crossbred sheep.

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

There are always challenges in a farming business, however with every challenge there is an opportunity. We see them as an opportunity to improve,

grow and prosper. We focus on resilience and incremental improvement to combat those challenges.

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

We have had several highlights, and it's impossible to single one out. There is nothing more rewarding than being in a working environment where you have the opportunity to spend time with your family doing what you love.

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

The agriculture sector is full of opportunities like no other sector or industry. The sky is the limit and with the right attitude and commitment the ability to succeed is immense. Surround yourself with good people and do what you enjoy and love, that way success will come naturally as a by-product of your enthusiasm in your role.



Grant and Charlotte McNaughton with children Greer, Matilda and Fletcher.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



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Emma Wilson, a proud member of Dunedin Young Farmers.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Young Farmers are the future of the agriculture sector, so each month we shine the spotlight on a Young Farmer. Today we talk to **EMMA WILSON**

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

I have been a member of Dunedin Young farmers since November. The previous four years I was a member of Thornbury Young Farmers.

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

Highlights: Weekend trips away and attending events with other clubs are always good fun. Some of the best events have been attending the evening shows for FMG Young Farmer of the Year, club camping trips and interclub events.

Benefits: There is always an event coming up to attend which keeps the calendar pretty full. It is also great meeting people from all different agri-careers. The network you gain from young farmers is invaluable and can help you out in all areas of the Agri sector.

3. How did you become involved in agriculture?

I grew up on a sheep and cropping farm in Central Southland. Although I did not want to become a farmer myself, this is where my interest in the industry began.

4. What is your job now?

I am working as an accountant in Dunedin, with a rural focus. Previously in a similar role based out of Invercargill.

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

As environmental legislation changes, it would be great to see some financial incentives in place when you achieve them. Many of our growers are already performing well in this area and deserve to be rewarded. The financial incentive could also be a good way to convince those not ready to invest to catch up, especially when the cost of farming has increased so much recently.

6. What are your future plans?

I've just finished my chartered accountancy, so now working towards applying that knowledge practically in the industry. The goal is to end up in the advisory space, with a focus on the agricultural industry.

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

Sounds cheesy but it would have to be my parents. Growing up on a smaller family farm I had a good understanding of how tough and rewarding the industry can be. The farm changed so much as I grew up to ensure that new opportunities to improve production and diversity income were looked into.

A couple of these included also becoming a crop farm, trialling different winter feeds, leasing some land or using an automatic lamb feeder. I also appreciate that no matter how tough and busy things did get on farm, Mum was always first to put her hand up to give back in many volunteer committees and Dad somehow always managed to get things done on farm for a last minute trip to some of our big sports competitions.



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Searching for happiness

In my line of work, something I hear from almost every client, is some variation of "I just want to be happy".

It makes total sense - you've probably thought the same at some point in your life.

It's something I often hear from parents too - they just want their children to be happy. This is quite a big expectation to have of them.

What if the way we are looking at what it means to achieve and embody happiness is setting us up for failure?

Our never-ending search for happiness is often based on an abstract concept of how we must feel positive emotions at all times - that happiness is the default emotion - and anything less is a potential sign of mental illness or that we are defective in some way.

Interestingly, the idea of happiness at all costs is a western concept - the ways in which we think about and try to obtain happiness are quite different to those in developing countries.

We have higher standards of living, better health and education and more wealth, yet we have the highest rates of anxiety and depression.

There is advice everywhere about how to create happiness, and it can be hard to know which advice is right - this article could be just another idea that leads you nowhere - but since societal misery only seems to be growing, maybe a different view could be helpful?

It is an unhelpful and inaccurate belief that happiness is the only acceptable emotion, when as human beings, we possess a full range of emotions that also encompass uncomfortable emotions like sadness, anger, and fear.

Being on a constant wild goose chase for "positive" emotions and an endless fight to rid ourselves of "negative" ones, is a struggle against the nature of humans.

What if, what you think



Rural registered counsellor Kathryn Wright.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

about happiness as feeling constant joy, pleasure and gratification was something of an unreachable target?

Far more obtainable and realistic is to begin to build a rich, full and meaningful life that is full of the people, activities and

actions that you desire deep in your heart.

Know that you have very little control over what you think and feel on any given day, but you do have a lot of control over the things that you do.

Physically getting up to make

contact with someone who means something to you, or putting one foot in front of the other on a walk, or researching your next career or education goal. These are what will start to build that life. By moving in the direction of what is meaningful to you, doing the

things that open you up to vitality and meaning, you will begin to experience a sense of living your life well, rather than seeking an unobtainable or fleeting feeling of pleasure.

- By Kathryn Wright, registered counsellor



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The Big Feed fills food banks



Dave Letele, Wayne Langford and Matt Chisholm hosted the telethon.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

By Pretoria Gordon

The Big Feed rural telethon, hosted by Dave Letele, Matt Chisholm and Wayne Langford, raised over 700,000 meals for food banks nationwide.

The 14-hour live telethon was streamed online from 6am to 8pm on the 14th of December from Lincoln University.

Meat the Need co-founder Wayne Langford said it was an incredible day and a heart-warming result despite being a tough financial time for farmers and their communities up and down the country.

"It was fantastic to get to over 700,000 mince and milk meals for the event itself and with donation lines open, we're still counting and still hoping people can keep giving to grow this number," he said.

The telethon featured 14 hours of interviews, entertainment, challenges, competitions, discussions, and fundraising events.

Langford said that hearing stories from food bank recipients, such as Leasso from the Salvation Army, was a powerful reminder of the importance of the cause.

"It was great to have food banks play a part in the telethon, to raise

awareness of how much demand there is out there," he said.

The country came out in force to support the event, which saw food banks throughout the country fill up with donations.

Fonterra and Miraka made dairy donations, Silver Fern Farms chipped in twice before the end of the day, and ANZCO donated 1 tonne of mince for every landmark hit on the Hicky hitchhiking tour, as it made its way down the country.

This totalled 13 tonnes, an incredible 104,000 meals.

Farm Right's managed farms gave a cow from every farm, a \$30,000 donation, while the Federated Farmers Board emptied their own pockets to the tune of \$10,000 under the condition Langford got a cow tattoo.

Chisolm didn't get off lightly, ending the day with a green mohawk, thanks to a similar condition from Ballance Agri-Nutrients.

"We live in a country that produces so much food, it fills me with pride to see our communities seeing the need, to Meat the Need and help try to make sure no one goes hungry," Langford said.

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Can my joints improve? Part 1

I have been working with someone who has had problems with his knees. He had damaged one knee some time ago. In more recent times his 'good' knee had started to deteriorate from osteoarthritis. Eventually his 'good' knee became worse than the knee damaged in an accident.

During a monthly review he told me the results were amazing. He has much less pain and is more mobile. He has come from a position where working was becoming increasingly difficult to now being more confident about the future.

There are several lessons we can learn from this. The first is that our bodies have an extraordinary ability to heal. However, this healing is dependent on the smooth operation of our healing systems. In many cases healing is restricted because the body system that is designed to heal the damage is somehow faulty or has just



stopped functioning. The outcome of this is always disease.

In this case we made several changes. The first is to try and identify foods that either cause inflammation or in some way restrict healing. Two of the most important groups of nutrients are fats, because they govern the inflammatory pathways and antioxidants because they protect our cells from damage.

We can also cheat a bit. Actually, we can cheat a lot. I see effective Joint health supplements as the ultimate cheat. We can target specific compounds that have a direct therapeutic function in sore joints.

For example, with joints, we can add therapeutic levels of chondroitin sulphate to greatly impact the health and stability of cartilage. Adding significant amounts of Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric can reduce inflammation and swelling in the joint capsule. Next edition we continue this discussion and look at the second lesson we can learn.

Five minutes with...

Name: Kate Acland

Role: Chair of Beef and Lamb NZ, farmer and mother of three.

Favourite holiday spot: We were lucky enough to go to New York recently and that was mind blowing, but you can't beat parking up beside one of our gorgeous South Island lakes with a barbecue and boat – we're so spoilt for choice here.

Best concert you've ever been to: Big Day Out 1997 – first (almost) adult concert – Soundgarden, The Offspring and so many more.

Favourite movie: Too many to choose from. I'm going to have to go back to my all-time teenage favourites – Top Gun, closely followed by Dirty Dancing.

What's your New Year resolution? Not sure I've thought that far ahead!

Three dream dinner party guests: Michelle Obama, Princess Anne, Angela Merkel – three inspiring women with a wealth of wisdom to share.

Favourite book: I'm not a big TV watcher, so fiction is my escape. I love a story about somewhere I've never been – Where the Crawdads Sing and Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil are two of my favourites. Currently I'm re-reading our entire Bryce Courtenay collection, which is perfect summer reading.



Kate Acland.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

What does summer mean to you? Sunny days out on the farm with the kids on school holidays, long lunches and a hit of tennis. More time at home which is precious.

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



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John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

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Clothing for the country

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Amanda Wilson has turned her frustration at being unable to find suitable country-inspired clothing for her son Cooper, into a successful clothing brand, Dusty Shepherd.

"My son Cooper is my biggest inspiration; without him, I would never have seen myself going down the path of designing clothing.

"His adventurous nature and desire to get stuck in with life on the farm inspired me to create clothing a little farmer should wear and rip around in," Wilson says.

Wilson runs a contract milking operation of 1300 cows with her partner Tim in South Canterbury, as well as a dryland stock farm in Waitaki, so she knows first-hand what Kiwi farmers and their children need in clothing for both on and off the farm.

Dusty Shepherd was launched as a children's clothing brand in 2021, but after feedback from customers, it quickly evolved to include adult clothing as well.

"It's such a fun name and brand for the rural industry.

"Whether you like your children to dress like Mum or Dad do, or whether you just want to freshen and style up your wardrobe for work or play with something a little different, it's all inspired by the land we live on."

Wilson designs the clothing herself, with all pieces manufactured from cotton so they are breathable and wear well.

Wilson says she gets a buzz from the support she receives from customers and enjoys the social side of the business.

"Being on the farm all the time, it's sometimes hard to meet new people."



Amanda Wilson designs all of the Dusty Shepherd garments herself.

Wilson sells Dusty Shepherd clothing through the company website and at local events and fetes, with the NZ AG Show in Christchurch being the most significant event Wilson sold at so far.

"Our clothing isn't solely targeted at rural people; it's for everyone.

"Our clothing can easily take them from the farm to town and is always tidy."

Wilson says that with juggling the farm, parenthood and Dusty Shepherd, there is "always something going on", but the challenge gives her the fuel to keep improving the business.

"The biggest challenge this year has been balancing the farm work, school and keeping up with the computer work side of all of the businesses, as I have been rearing 1300 calves with 350 replacements this year."



Dusty Shepherd models strutting their stuff.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Dusty Shepherd has evolved from a children's clothing brand, to include adult clothing as well.

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A Moroccan meatball feast

Serves 4-6

Prep time: 15 mins

Cook time: 10 mins

Ingredients

Meatballs

• 500g Quality Mark lamb mince

• 1 onion finely chopped

• 2 garlic cloves crushed and chopped

• 2 tsp cumin seeds

• 2 tsp ground coriander

• ½ tsp ground ginger

• ¼ tsp ground cloves

• ¼ tsp ground cinnamon

• 1/3 cup couscous soaked in 1/3 cup boiled water

• 2 Tbsp tomato paste

• 1 egg lightly whisked

• ½ cup parsley finely chopped

• ½ tsp salt

• 1 Tbsp vegetable oil

Yoghurt sauce

• ¾ cup yoghurt

• ½ cup mayonnaise

• grated zest of 1 lemon

• 1 garlic clove crushed and chopped

• ½ cup fresh coriander finely chopped (or use parsley)

to serve

• hummus

• pita bread

you can also use wraps or flatbread.

• Fresh salad

e.g. tomatoes, lettuce, red onion, etc.

Method

To Make Meatballs

Place all the meatball ingredients in a large bowl with

some cracked pepper. Using clean hands, mix until well combined. Roll into walnut-sized balls.

Heat a little oil in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat.

Add half the meatballs, cook

for a couple of minutes then turn gently using tongs, being careful not to break them up.

Cook for another 7-10 minutes, turning to brown all over until cooked through.

Transfer to a warmed plate,

cover with foil and repeat with the remaining meatballs.

To Serve

For yoghurt sauce, combine all ingredients in a small bowl and mix to combine. Taste and season as required.

Spread some hummus on a pre-warmed wrap, pita or flatbread.

Top with meatballs, salad, the yoghurt sauce and feta.

– Recipe courtesy of Beef + Lamb NZ.

Recipe author: MenuAid



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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

A passion for lavender oil's therapeutic and health benefits has seen two Chinese medicine practitioners become hands-on owners of New Zealand's largest organic lavender farm.

Dr John Yi Jiang and Qing Wang purchased the NZ Lavender farm in 2019 after Jiang experienced the health benefits of lavender first-hand.

The previous owner of the lavender farm gave Jiang a bottle of oil to try, and Jiang used the oil to treat his persistent mouth ulcers and was impressed with the results.

“I had ulcers in my mouth for nearly forty years because we had been working very hard in China, and I was very stressed.

“I had tried Chinese and Western medicine; I tried everything.

“But then I rubbed the lavender oil on my ulcers, and it relieved the pain within five seconds.

“It was amazing,” Jiang says.

NZ Lavender Farm was on the market, and after two years of deliberating, Jiang and Wang purchased

the 50-acre property with no prior knowledge of farming but a passion for creating high-quality, pharmaceutical-grade lavender oil.

“We didn't know how to drive a tractor; we didn't know how to farm. We only knew medicine.”

After purchasing the farm, Jiang and Wang initially continued to work full-time in their Chinese Healthcare clinic, AcuCentre, which has branches in Christchurch and Ashburton.

Jiang quickly realised that for the lavender farm to succeed, he would need to be on-farm, at least part-time, to keep a watchful eye on the operations.

“In the beginning, I relied on people to manage the farm while I worked in the clinic full-time, but the first two years were a disaster.”

The farm has over 110,000 *Lavendula Augustifolia* 'Avice Hill' plants, which are hand-weeded and grown using organic methods.

The Avice Hill cultivar, named after the Christchurch herbalist who discovered the species, is unique because it is one of the lowest allergen varieties, making the oil perfect for medicinal use.



Lavender honey from hives on the property is a popular item.



Dr John Yi Jiang with the farm's steam distiller.

Careful attention to detail throughout all stages of growth and production ensures a high-quality oil, with around 600 litres produced each harvest.

Weeding is a delicate process, with care needed by a staff of around 15 to avoid damaging the plants' fragile flowers.

Jiang said that finding staff to work in the fields has been challenging.

"It's very hard to get people to work here, even when we pay \$28

per hour for pulling weeds.

"People would come for an interview but not turn up for the job."

This year, Jiang said staff have been easier to source, with visitors to the district wanting a "working holiday".

Harvest takes place typically in early to mid-January over a period of around two weeks.

Three staff are responsible for the harvest, with the farm using a specialised Clier harvester



NZ Lavender marketing director Leonie Paloma and owner Dr John Yi Jiang pose with the farm's sign, a popular spot for visitors to take photographs. PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

Reported health benefits of lavender

- Relieves insomnia
- Can alleviate anxiety
- Has wound healing properties
- Aids in respiratory health
- Supports the digestive system
- Antifungal properties
- Skin health, including acne, eczema and burns
- Menstrual cramping

imported from France.

Once harvested, time is of the essence to ensure the highest quality lavender oil.

All flowers go from the field to the farm's distillery within an hour of harvest.

Oil is extracted using a computerised steam distillation process, before being decanted into glass bottles.

During flowering, the farm opens its gates to visitors who can have their photos taken in the

picturesque purple fields.

A farm shop carries lavender products visitors can purchase to experience the benefits of lavender at home.

Export of the oil was a significant focus of the business by the previous owners, but Jiang has expanded into a range of beauty and household products aimed at the local market.

NZ Lavender marketing director Leonie Paloma says the products are designed for New

Zealand households with strong ethics about what products they choose.

"We endeavour to offer affordable pro-active alternatives to use in everyday life.

"We try to open the door to people who want to go down a more natural path."

The product range, which includes face creams, sleep balms, lavender tea and honey, is sold on the NZ Lavender website, at the farm and in local stores.

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Growing the value of precision dairy farming



I'm proud of our progress

Although the election did not go Labour's way, I am grateful to be heading back to Parliament this year as a List MP and as the Labour Spokesperson for agriculture, rural communities, and biosecurity. I'll have more to say about Labour's plan for the primary industries soon, but I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on the last six years.

It was as a List MP that I first entered Parliament in 2017. Since then, the country has been through a lot: terrorism, natural disasters, and a pandemic. Labour steered a steady ship through it all, but dealing with these events, of course, was not

without its complexities. It's Labour's values and our care for all New Zealanders – not just the few – that drives us. It is true that we have work to do to make sure Kiwis know and feel that Labour backs them. That's why we will be working with communities right across the country to build this support back.

Over our time in government, we worked hard to tackle the long-term challenges facing New Zealand and I'm proud of the progress that we made on the big issues like housing, inequality, and climate change. We were able to raise incomes, increase the housing supply,

help more New Zealanders into work and training, and reduce climate emissions. The new coalition government made up of National, ACT, and New Zealand First want to leave all of this to chance, likely taking the country backwards.

After five years of hard work, sacrifice, and collaboration with MPI, DairyNZ and Beef+Lamb, we moved closer towards our goal of eradicating Mycoplasma Bovis. I want to acknowledge the hardship borne by farmers and their families during this time. I also want to thank the broader sector who stepped up their animal tracing efforts, allowing

us to move the programme on to a new surveillance phase. Being the first in the world to attempt eradication, we have built a playbook over the last five years with immense effort from everyone involved.

In the year to June 2023, New Zealand's food and fibre sector hit a new record high, with export earnings hitting \$57.4 billion. Labour's focus on trade and export growth was a major cornerstone of our economic recovery plan. Together, with the help of the sector, we secured new free trade agreements with the UK and the EU, as well as an upgrade to the China FTA.

The new government's job now is to continue supporting our producers by opening doors for exporters wherever they can and build on the seven new or upgraded FTAs secured since Labour entered office.

We campaigned on progress and it's something I will continue to fight for. I will also continue to be a voice for rural Canterbury and would love to hear from you. Our diverse line-up for the 54th Parliament brings energy and experience to the very important job of opposition. I am confident our Labour team is up to the challenge of holding the new Government to account.

Growers encouraged to join pilot harvest research

South Island crop farmers are being encouraged to join a pilot project to test the nutrient content in their grain and seed crops.

Farms will need to supply harvest sample bags for analysis, much like they provide merchants, with a cost of \$150 for each paddock sample.

Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) growers leading change facilitator Donna Lill, who is coordinating the project, said it was an opportunity to tap into the

expertise of the United Kingdom's Yield Enhancement Network (YEN) Nutrition programme.

The cost covers the lab analysis and two YEN Nutrition reports.

"The benefit of working with YEN UK is they have the systems and database. They also have the knowledge around benchmarking and the critical levels for different nutrients. There may be differences between the UK and New Zealand, but it is a starting point," she said.

FAR will meet with participants in autumn to discuss the results and what they might mean for paddock management.

The initiative comes after a talk by a UK expert Professor Roger Sylvester-Bradley said farmers were missing out on vital crop management information – and potentially additional yield and returns – by not analysing the nutrient levels of their harvested crops.

Crop nutrient analysis is a way



Roger Sylvester-Bradley.

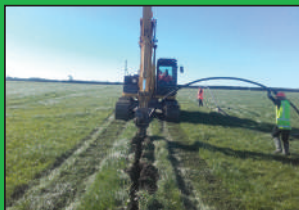
for growers to check how well they are managing their nutrient input.

"Nutrient concentrations at harvest show whether crops captured insufficient, adequate or excess of each nutrient. Without measures at harvest, nutrient management is guesswork and this prevents improvement."

Sylvester-Bradley found that more than 80% of crops on farms in the UK show a deficiency in at least one nutrient.

He recommends an annual grain analysis on all 12 essential nutrients.

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Fast track to farm success

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

After a career pivot, Abby Cook has thrown herself into the world of dairy farming with a passion that has seen her rise to be manager of Clearbrook Farm in Hinds after just two years in the industry.

Cook grew up on a farm in Southland before the family moved to Waikato after her father passed away in 2009.

Despite always considering a career in agriculture, Cook initially decided to pursue a different path.

She studied at the University of Otago, gaining a Bachelor of Applied Science majoring in Pharmacology and Forensics after encouragement from a career advisor at high school.

"I did Ag at school, and it never occurred to me to do something different.

"My mum encouraged me to try something different; she said the dairy industry would always be there.

"As I get older, I realise she was right about quite a lot of things."

Despite finding the work interesting, after finishing her degree, Cook realised that being stuck inside a laboratory was not for her.

Keen to get outside and return to her farming roots, Cook

discovered the Grassroots Dairy Management Programme and put in an application.

The programme connects university graduates with farmers who support students in completing 25 modules in just under a year while working on the farm for a competitive salary.

The programme aims to fast-track graduates into farm management positions in the dairy industry.

"The graduate programme was a perfect gateway into the industry," Cook said.

"It mixes learning with a full-time job."

After an interview process, Cook was accepted into the programme and was placed at Clearbrook Farm with owner Campbell Tait, who has been involved in the programme since the beginning.

The ten-month programme was developed by a group of farmers, including Tait, to encourage graduates to take on-farm management roles rather than corporate career paths.

"There were five of us in my year, all working on different farms.

"Once a week we would head off together, whether it was to someone else's farm or to talk to someone from DairyNZ, or a vet.

"We basically had an expert in every field each week,"



Abby Cook says the most important advice she has to women entering the dairy industry is to "believe in yourself". PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

Graduates could then take what they had learned back to the farm, implement that knowledge and talk it through with the farm owner.

"There is no way I would be managing already without the Dairy Grads Programme," Cook said.

"Campbell has been quite present and is still there to help

me if I need it.

"He loves training people, and that's the kind of boss you want."

Tait encouraged Cook to enter the Dairy Industry Trainee of the Year category in the Dairy Industry Awards (NZDIA) last year.

While Cook didn't win the title, she placed runner-up and is keen to enter the awards again this year.

"There's nothing to lose, only stuff to learn."

Cook credits the graduate programme, the NZDIA and the local Hinds Young Farmers, of which she is chairperson, for helping her grow her professional and social network in Canterbury.

"Young Farmers has been really great for meeting people, and I love bringing in people that are new to the area.

"They instantly make friends. It's grown my network insanely; it's really cool."

Cook says the most important thing for young women entering the dairy industry is to "believe in yourself."

"I've always had a huge insecurity about being able to do the physical work."

Cook said that although she was raised on a farm, she had been too young to have had any practical farm experience before joining the programme.

"I didn't even know how to start a motorbike, and I'd never even cupped a cow, but it's not that hard.

"It's more of a mental barrier than actually physically doing it.

"Back yourself, you can learn. Surround yourself with good people who want you to succeed."

Cook said her ultimate goal is farm ownership.

"I loved being raised on a farm, so that's what I want for my own family."

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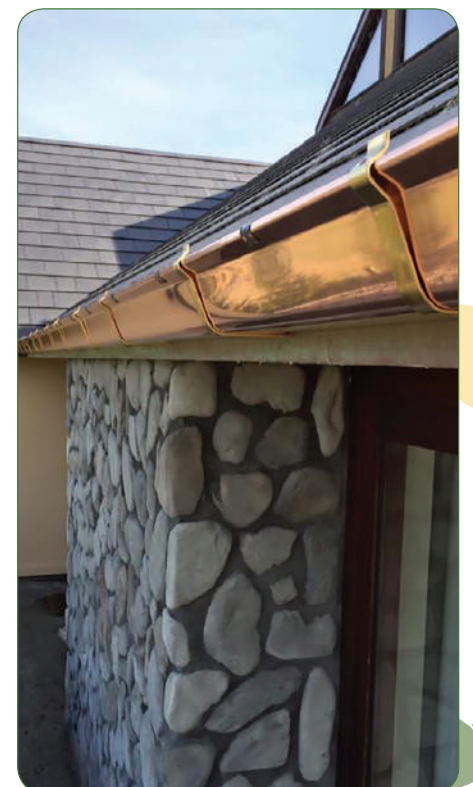
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Bright bales bring smiles

By Pretoria Gordon

Some unexpected new faces have been giving motorists heading north out of Ashburton reason to smile.

An Ashburton couple has been spreading Christmas cheer through their hay bale displays every December for the past five years.

Natasha and Hamish Moore began with a caterpillar in 2019, followed by Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, a Christmas tree, and Smurfs last year.

This year, their display on State Highway 1 features the three little pigs and the big bad wolf.

Natasha said it started when they couldn't find somewhere to store some baleage they had made, so put it out the front of the farm at the gate. "We thought it would be funny to put a face on the bales - eyes, mouth, and some pool noodles to create antennae," she said.

Over the years, the display has become a popular tourist attraction, with people from all over coming to see the new theme every year.

"We just thought, we've got so many people going past our gate, so let's just give them something to smile about," Natasha said.

Despite the limited range of colours available, Natasha and Hamish always manage to come



The three little pigs, and the big bad wolf, have popped up north of Ashburton.

PHOTO: PRETORIA GORDON

up with something unique and unexpected, keeping people guessing until they see the display in person.

While the couple has a list of ideas for future displays, they

often get inspired by the people guessing the theme. "I've got a few more ideas just from people guessing. And yeah, we're really limited around that bale wrap colour, what I can get," Natasha

said.

They start planning six months in advance. "I start doing some initial sketches and start ordering some materials, because it's more about just logistically how you

can make the shapes out of things with hay bales."

"There are some things that I'd love to be able to do, but I just can't wrap my head around how I'd actually create it," Natasha said.

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Tactics for summer weather

Summer is here and for some it may continue to bring rain while for others it has been a gradual progression to warm dry conditions. With summer here, we can also expect weather commentators will continue to encourage preparedness given the prediction of an El Niño.

It is never easy to predict summer weather, but El Niño weather has a history of significant droughts occurring predominantly across Eastern

parts of the country. That's why developing a plan early for your farming business is necessary as it is important to be prepared and ready to respond.

I have seen farmers implement different strategies that work for their farm and location over the years, but there are some general areas that are good to consider.

Strategies can include feed demand and assessing feed supplies, along with considering how conditions are impacting

your cows.

Feed demand and supplements:

Act early to reduce feed demand, including considering drying off lower-producing animals and younger stock early when they are in good condition, reducing the pressure on available resources.

If feed availability is low, carefully choose supplements based on energy content, cost, storage, wastage and feeding logistics.

It's important to evaluate the cost of any supplementary feed bought in against the cost of alternative options to fill the deficit.

Importantly, ensure decisions are made in context of the current milk price, and consider the long-term implications on the farm and business.

Heat stress:

Nationwide there are days every summer where cows get too hot for comfort. Therefore, access to shade and plenty of drinking water

are the best line of defence, but cooling with water and changes to milking and feeding routine can help when shade isn't enough.

Check if your cows:

- Are breathing faster.
- Cows standing more but grazing less.
- Increased water intake and cows hanging around troughs.
- Cows slower walking to and from the shed.

– By Tony Finch, DairyNZ external engagement manager.

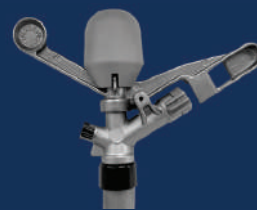
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HOMEOPATHIC FARM SERVICES

Busy year for group

By Sophie Blair

The Lagmhor Westerfield Catchment Group hosted some good group activities in their first year, and it has been great to have involvement from the community.

We have appreciated borrowing the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective's (MCCC) portable nitrate sensor on two occasions now – in August and November. Landowners brought water samples in from various sources; drinking water to surface water from drains, springs and the Ashburton River; and we were able to provide instantaneous readings for nitrate in these samples.

Results were very interesting overall. No household drinking water was over the maximum rate for NZ drinking standards, which was pleasing to see. A sample taken from the Ashburton River at the end of Sheates Road was 1.69mg/L nitrate-N which provided useful context.

The catchment group will continue to offer this instantaneous nitrate testing for our Lagmhor Westerfield community in 2024, thanks to MCCC.

Another highlight was a tiki tour around the district looking at native plantings at different stages to glean bright ideas for our own properties.

We visited one property where

AgSmart UAV Ltd has been using a drone to spray out the side of drains/ waterways and letting them regenerate by themselves. It is amazing what native plant species are coming back just by removing the competition of gorse, broom, and other weeds, without needing to plant out new plants.

The catchment group visited Carex Secta plantings along the Windermere Drain that the Lowlands Catchment Group have been working hard on. It was a very visual example of plants at different stages and the positive effects that these are having on the waterway.

We have been fortunate that passionate farmers have opened their gates, showing us, with pride, the practical and effective plantings that have been undertaken on farms. From the work of the Carex Project through the University of Canterbury, to various local initiatives, the progress we saw was inspiring. It has provided our catchment group with insight into the possibilities, the gains in both the short and long term, plenty of advice, and the desire to want to go home and get our own hands dirty and plant more of our own waterways.

We closed 2023 with another water testing drop in session; and we're looking to put in place a water monitoring programme this year.

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Nitrogen use down

By Sharon Davis

A Mid Canterbury dairy farm is already meeting its 2030 target to reduce nitrogen losses by 25%, well ahead of national and regional regulatory requirements.

Phill and Jos Everest from Flemington Farm take their roles as custodians seriously. They are part of Synlait's Lead with Pride programme, and have been part of Dairy NZ's sustainable future initiative.

The Everests, who farm with their son Paul and his partner Sarah, have made a range of changes to their farm practices to meet nitrogen loss regulations.

This includes reducing nitrogen fertiliser use by 36% – ahead of national and regional regulatory requirements – and developing an annual nitrogen application plan to identify monthly application rates needed to meet the new targets.

Thanks to these on-farm changes, they met their 2030 target to reduce nitrogen losses in 2021 and they're continuing to experiment with options to improve their environmental footprint.

Phill Everest said the first year they reduced the amount of nitrogen fertiliser, there was less grass and a net cost to the operation with less milk produced.

It reduced profitability by \$40,000 in the first year, but the Hinds-based farm

had been able to pick up most of that loss in the following years.

The Everests don't apply fertiliser in May, which is a wet month and a high-risk period for leeching nitrogen.

However, Everest said the biggest contribution to improving their environmental footprint was the inclusion of plantain in the pasture mix.

He included plantain seed at 1.5kg per hectare when resewing paddocks and topped that up with additional plantain seed when the maintenance fertiliser was applied, to keep plantain at 15% of their pasture mix.

"That gives us an 11% reduction in our nitrogen."

While plantain seed is more expensive and limits weed control options, it does lower nitrogen and has a beneficial outcome for the environment which is important, he said.

Everest also reduced the protein content of autumn feed by adding fodderbeet to his cows' feed.

Feeding less protein results in less nitrogen in the cows' urine. This provided a 12% reduction in nitrogen in autumn urine, or a 1.3% reduction overall, for the whole year, Everest said.

The farm also harvests and stores effluent to use instead of a nitrogen-rich fertiliser.

"You can store the effluent and apply it at the best time for the plants."

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Dry conditions for some South Island farmers

By Sharon Davis

Farmers in parts of the South Island face a summer of drought and water restrictions as an El Nino weather pattern plays out.

The National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) and other weather experts expect drought conditions to prevail on the east coast of both North and South Islands – while the west coast of South Island is likely to be wetter than usual.

Average to above-average rainfall is expected for Southland and the West Coast, with strong westerly winds.

However, the remainder of the South Island is likely to be drier than usual.

The frequent westerly winds are part of the reason the wider Canterbury region is drier than average. Weather systems pass over the region faster while the dry winds reduce water levels, dry out the land and evaporate water surfaces faster.

Marlborough can also expect strong westerly winds and a drier-than-average summer. Nelson can expect more winds from the

west, but is largely sheltered from the rain.

Several district councils introduced water restrictions for urban and rural users in the second week of January as river and spring flows dropped noticeably.

Horticulture New Zealand said planning was crucial to surviving an El Nino drought.

It recommends farmers actively monitor weather forecasts alongside their crop health and strategies to manage potential drought conditions and optimise water use and plant health.

It suggested farmers plan for possible water restrictions and ensure that irrigation water is used as efficiently as possible. This includes ensuring irrigation systems are maintained and free of leaks and watering plants in the coolest part of the day to minimise water loss to evaporation.

Another tip from Horticulture NZ was to irrigate the most profitable blocks first, irrigating crops fully during critical periods, but not at other times, monitoring soil moisture, and taking water stress measurements to decide which crops to irrigate.



Horticulture New Zealand says farmers should optimise water use.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



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Quinoa – a 13-year journey

By Sharon Davis

A Methven farmer with a love for growing different seeds has developed a crop-to-kitchen business supplying quinoa to Canterbury homes and beyond.

Third-generation crop and seed farmer Andrew Currie embarked on his quinoa journey when he tried some ancient grains as rotation crops for his regular wheat, barley, and grass seed crops.

The first quinoa trial on Currie's 300-hectare farm was 3kgs of supermarket-bought quinoa seed.

It grew well, but the yields were not good, he said.

He's experimented with quinoa for the past 13 or so years, bringing in seeds with improved genetics, better yields, nuttier taste, and lower saponin.

Saponin is a naturally occurring outer coating that gives quinoa a bitter taste to deter birds. Quinoa with high saponin needs to be rinsed and washed before it is cooked. That is a process that's not necessary with Currie's lower-saponin quinoa.

Although quinoa is traditionally grown at high altitudes in the Andes, Currie finds it grows well in Canterbury, but is hard to harvest.

He grows about 10 tonnes of quinoa each year and sells both seeds and flakes wholesale in 25kg bags and retails directly to New Zealand customers looking for

locally-grown, spray-free quinoa.

Fast forward to today and Currie has just spent "a fortune" to bring in seeds for a new variety of quinoa from Europe for next year's crop. He's hoping for better yields from the latest seeds.

He's also got three different types of millet and chickpea seeds coming in.

"I love growing different stuff. It's fun –and I've got an understanding bank manager."

Experimenting with alternative crops is in Currie's blood. His father was one of a few farmers to get into canary seed back in 1964.

Currie still grows canary seed along with Hungarian millet – another staple bird seed.

"Some years it (millet) grows really well and some years it fails really well. It's been 37 years and I'm still learning how to grow it."

Currie said he was still searching for viable break crops and found that a challenge.

He's tried a wide range including grey-striped sunflowers and hemp. These grow well, but wild birds made them a "struggle".

A number of seeds, like coriander and chia, don't do well. While Canterbury gets warm days it cools at night and the total heat units were not enough for either crop, Currie said.

Storage, buckwheat and brassicas grow well but the viability of these crops varies



Third-generation crop and seed farmer Andrew Currie embarked on his quinoa journey more than 13 years ago. PHOTOS: SHARON DAVIS



Quinoa flakes can be used to replace dry ingredients in baking, thickening soups and as a porridge.

from year to year depending on the price for each seed. At lower prices, it can pay for the cost of production but does not put food on the table.

Currie said it was a "learning curve" to go from quinoa farmer to supplying the public. He and his partner, Gaewynne Hood, had to learn about health and safety requirements, labelling laws and biodegradable packaging.

They sell white, golden and

white quinoa as seeds, as well as quinoa flakes online.

"The flakes are more versatile than the seeds but we sell more seeds than flakes."

Currie said the flakes could be used to replace dry ingredients in baking, thickening soups and as a porridge.

They have recipes online that range from garlic, zucchini and quinoa fritters to chocolate quinoa muffins and cakes.

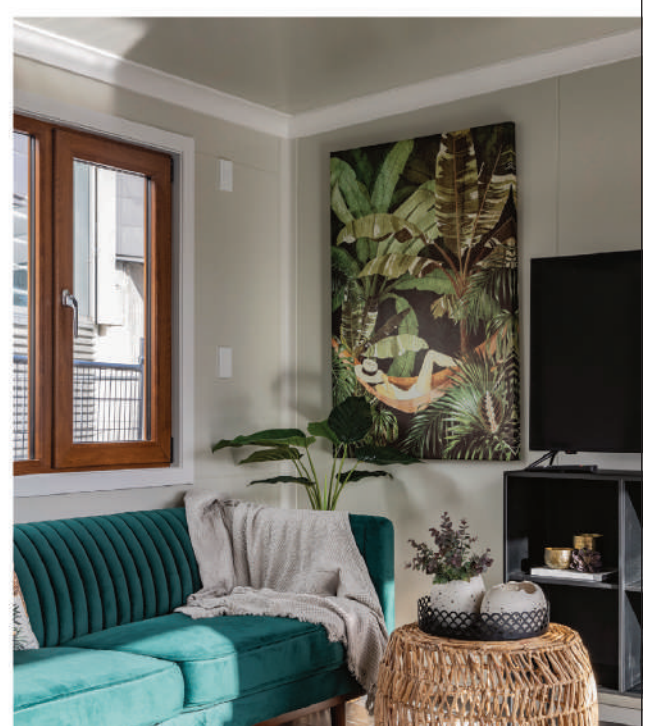
Quinoa Fast Facts

Quinoa (pronounced keen-wah) is part of the amaranth family which includes beets, chard and spinach.

It was historically a vital part of the Andean diet, dating back to the Incas.

It is a nutrition-dense seed with high levels of protein, vitamins, minerals, and fibre to help you stay full for longer.

Quinoa has recently gained popularity as a superfood and is popular with vegans, vegetarians and people on a gluten-free diet.



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Southern Field Days Overview



- **Field Days location:** 575 Waimumu Road, Waimumu, (12kms from) Gore (not sure if you would like to include this but if people want to put it into their maps when driving)
- **Parking:** guided on site parking
- **Chair person :** Steve Henderson
- **Dates:** 14-16 February
- **Opening Times:** 9am-5pm each day
- **Ticket prices and where to purchase:** purchase tickets on the day at ticket booth on entry, \$20 adults, children under 16 and students free
- **Key Field Days Highlights:** Tractor pull, Southern Field Days Farm Innovation

Awards 2024, NZFC south Island doubles fencing competition- South islands leading fencers are lining up to compete in this national level fencing competition, Young Farmers fencing competition, Speedshear at the MLT bar

- **Best place to follow for updates:** on the website www.southernfielddays.co.nz and like us on Facebook
- **Anything else visitors would need to know:** buy tickets at ticket booth upon arrival then head to the entry gates, there is a app (not available to download yet, for people to plan their day and help with navigation around the site.)

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Southern Field Days programme

Wednesday 14th February 2024

8.30am

Tractor Pull Briefing (Times may vary due to the weather. Listen to the PA)

9.00am

Tractor Pull Heats

9.00am

Farm Innovation Awards – Judging begins

Thursday 15th February 2024

8.30am

Tractor Pull Briefing (Times may vary due to the weather. Listen to the PA)

8.30am

NZFC South Island Doubles Fencing Competition (Judges Briefing) Demonstration Area. South Islands leading fencers are lining up to compete in this national level fencing competition.

9.00am

Tractor Pull Heats

9.00am

Young Farmers Fencing Competition - Demonstration Area

11:30am

Prize giving for Kids Colouring in Competition out the front of the office

Friday 16th February 2024

12:00pm

Presentations in front of the Office.

- Farm Innovation Awards
- Gallagher Group Best Site Award
- Bowmar Trophy Best Machinery Site Award

1:00pm

Tractor Pull Final (approximate, listen to the PA.)

2:30pm

Speedshear (at the MLT Bar)

Boy racing rural style at Field Days

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

Tractorpull New Zealand (TPNZ) is once again taking its sled to this year's Southern Field Days in Waimumu in what is a firm crowd favourite.

"We sort of refer to the Tractor Pull as a boy race, rural style," says TPNZ chairperson Vaughan Coy.

"The concept is making your tractor pull the furthest.

"He who pulls the furthest wins."

The TPNZ sled is a weight transfer tractor pull sled, which gets heavier as the tractor goes down the track.

Instead of a weight box, TPNZ uses a weight tractor that lifts itself vertically to increase the weight pulled by increasing resistance.

This means that all tractors, no matter size or horsepower, can race competitively, as the weight can be transferred evenly down the track and applied at a rate according to the tractor's class.

"Our sled is unique in the world in respect that it has a load cell in the chain.

"So it's recording and reporting back to the computer so it knows the weight and distance and how much to increase the weight by.

"Our tractor is different from a lot of



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

sleds in the world in that it lifts the tractor off the ground to achieve the weight."

Coy said the tractor pull was about drivers getting the most out of their tractors.

The most successful drivers will have the right gear selection, throttle control and tyre pressure.

"Tractors are very easy to drive but hard to operate.

"It's a test of the driver's skill and how well they can read the track.

"They go in their own time; there is no

time limit."

Entry classes include standard tractors over and under eleven tonne, modified and a pre-1985 class called 'old school'.

Sometimes, trucks even join in the fun.

"If it's got a drawbar on, we give it a go. "We even had the Fijian rugby team pulling the sled at Waimumu a few years ago, so we are all about having fun."

Anyone wanting to enter the tractor pull at the Southern Field Days can download an entry form on the TPNZ website and pay the entry fee on the day.

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SCAN for a sneak peek

Field Days coming soon

The Southern Field Days is coming up this month, with the three day event running for the first time since 2020 on February 14-16 in Waimumu.

Covid restrictions saw the biennial event cancelled in 2022 for the first time in its 40 year history, but this has only added to the excitement surrounding this years Southern Field Days, says chairperson Steve Henderson.

“The cancellation has created a lot of hype around the 2024 event.

“If you are out to purchase new equipment, or pick up a few new ideas this is the one stop shop.

“It might just be you need to catch up with some mates, grab a hotdog, drink and relax, this is also the spot to come.”

Henderson, who is dairy farming with his wife Tracey in Awarua near Invercargill, has been involved in the event since 2012, and says he is “still learning”.

“The first few events were just learning how it was run, and the committee has been great in sharing their knowledge.”

The event is a highlight on the agricultural calendar, attracting around 45,000 visitors and over 700 site holders.

Henderson says the event gives the local economy a much needed boost.

“It has a huge impact on local businesses from accommodation to eatery’s outside the gate to sales and



Steven Henderson.

contacts made for local businesses.”

The event is entirely volunteer –run, and Henderson said the committee have “just a get it done” mindset, and he has enjoyed bringing fresh ideas to the table.

“There is seldom an occasion where a problem can’t be sorted, and the team thrive on putting the event together.

“It’s known as the ‘friendly field days’, and this is what attendees and site holders love about the event.”



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Calling all utes - old and new

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

The Methven Ute Muster, in its 3rd year, is set to be a star attraction at this year's Methven A&P Show on March 16.

The ute muster attracts a wide array of vehicles and organisers encourage anyone with a ute or pick-up to enter, whether your vehicle is show quality or a well-worn farm truck.

"We have entries from vintage

cars through to big Dodge Rams," Methven A&P Show committee member and Ute Muster organiser Craig Elliott says. Previous events have seen entries of classic pick-ups, new four-wheel-drives, company vehicles and farm trucks.

Some vehicles that are big on character but not on roadworthiness are transported on a trailer due to a lack of warrant of fitness or registration.

With categories that include

Best Presented and Cleanest Ute and the Dirtiest, Roughest Ute; there is a category for all utes, no matter their age or state of repair.

"All vehicles will be parked up at 10 am, and judging starts about 10:30.

"They have a prize giving around lunchtime and an opportunity to look around the other vehicles.

"It's basically like a car show," Elliott said.

With \$5000 in prizes up for

grabs from generous sponsors, winners are set to go home happy.

Winning vehicles also secure a spot in the Methven A&P Show grand parade.

Organisers are also planning to add a tug-of-war to the mix this year.

"We will shoulder-tap people on the day and see if they want to do a tug-of-war.

"We will line up a few different brands of vehicles and do that in the arena, outside the bar area."

Elliott said that utes were a passion for the younger generation, which has helped the event grow in popularity.

"You look around now, and a lot of the young ones drive utes instead of cars.

"It's just a good rural fun day out, basically."

Registration for the Ute Muster can be made on the day for a \$30 entry fee, which includes a driver's gate pass to the A&P Show.






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Quad accidents ‘worrying trend’

By Sharon Davis

December's spate of quad bike fatalities, including two in the South Island, has been described as "disturbing" and "worrying".

Safer Farms is calling on quad bike users to take rider safety seriously after six deaths in the past month.

Chairperson Lindy Nelson said the large number of tragedies involving quad bikes was an "incredibly disturbing and worrying trend" with "horrific consequences" for family members and local communities.

Nelson said riders should have helmets and roll over or crush protection as the bare minimum protection.

"With quads, we don't have enough farmers using the safety equipment.

"Quad bikes are getting bigger and bigger. There is no way, if they roll, that riders are not going to get hurt without the right protection."

She said cars were equipped with the likes of ASB brakes and airbags that allowed drivers to fail safely - and quad bike riders needed similar protection to allow them to fail without serious or fatal consequences.

Some members of Safer Farms were using helmets and crush protection alongside limiting the maximum speed. Quad users on these farms had rolled and walked away.

Other farms were moving away from



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

quad bikes. Some had changed to side-by-sides and other farms were using horses in terrain that is more difficult and where quads were more likely to roll.

Nelson said Safer Farms would be holding a webinar in February for farmers to share their experiences with quad bikes and develop a long-term plan for the safe use of quad bikes.

"If we don't control this it will be controlled through regulation - which could have unintended consequences," she said.

Nelson said a focus on quad safety was essential, especially during the holiday period when there were family, friends and visitors on the farm.

"Quad bikes are powerful and not for inexperienced people," she said.

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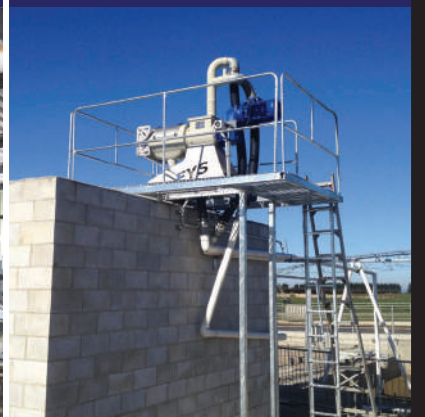
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