

# RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island wide 

MARCH 2024

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# CELEBRATING WOMEN

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# King Country farmer to be Silver Fern chairperson

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

Silver Fern Farms has confirmed that Anna Nelson will replace chairperson Rob Hewett following the cooperative's annual meeting on May 8.

Nelson, who grew up in Cheviot and now farms in the King Country, is looking forward to leading a unified board and working closely with shareholders and suppliers through the current challenges in the market.

"Right across our supply chain, everyone is feeling the pinch from current global market conditions. Global red meat demand is flat, and we're seeing large volumes of competing protein from the likes of Brazil and Australia," Nelson said.

"And as a farmer myself, I know our farmer suppliers are feeling the pressure on farmgate pricing alongside higher input costs and interest rates."

Nelson said that while the drop in commodity pricing has pulled everyone down, in areas where the cooperative has invested in brands and their customers, they have held value relative to the commodity product.

"While we've still got a way to go yet, the closer we can get to the end consumer, and the more we invest in partnerships across our supply chain, the more value we can capture and return to our suppliers and shareholders."

Nelson said that the attributes of New Zealand pastoral systems resonate with global consumers, but sometimes education is needed so different markets understand New Zealand farming practices.

"Our natural, nature-positive farming contrasts with protein supplied from increasingly intensive farming systems globally.

"New Zealand farmers also make a significant contribution to our local communities and the broader New Zealand economy, which also sets us apart from other farming nations.

"However, because our extensive red meat farming system is reasonably unique, it does mean we have to work that bit harder to explain it to consumers in markets such as parts of the US who might be used to different farming systems."

Nelson, who was appointed to

the Silver Fern Farms board in 2021, said she feels privileged to take on the role of chairperson.

"Farming has always been part of my life, and I'm grateful for all the opportunities I've had. Over the years, I've done a few courses, including the Kellogg Rural Leadership programme and several Silver Fern Farms governance development programmes. I also served as an Associate Director on the Beef + Lamb Board."

With the cooperative also recently appointing a new chief executive, Dan Boulton, the board has determined that outgoing chairperson Rob Hewett will remain an appointed director for a short period to ensure a smooth transition.

"While the new Chair and chief executive will each bring fresh perspectives and focus, ultimately, the board is united behind Silver Fern Farms' strategy and direction of travel, and it's important we keep momentum until the new changes are embedded," Hewett said.

"From our experience around the board table, the board and I have a great deal of confidence that Anna will be an exceptional chair.



Incoming chairperson Anna Nelson says taking on the role is a privilege.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

"Despite the prevailing market conditions we're experiencing, we

are going into the next period in good health and with a clear focus."

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Waitohi Ag Shareholder John Svensson surveys his barley harvest.

PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

Hot dry weather in Canterbury has meant a relatively easy harvest season.

Waitohi Ag shareholder and manager Ben Clarke is pleased with the season so far.

# Hot, dry weather leads to good Canterbury harvest

By Claire Inkson

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It's nearly a wrap for harvest in Canterbury for what has shaped up to be a good season.

"With going so hot and dry, this harvest has been a bit of a breeze," says North Canterbury's Waitohi Ag manager Ben Clarke.

Clarke said contractors have

been waiting for crops to be ready rather than being under pressure from farmers waiting to harvest.

"We are actually chasing crops, so it's quite nice for the boot to be on the other foot."

Yields have been varied, with winter crops underperforming.

"With being such a wet spring, winter crops just got drowned.

"But the spring crops have been

going really well."

Clarke said yields have been around 8-9 tonnes per hectare, which is a pleasing result for dry land spring crops.

Waitohi Ag contracts over most of the Hurunui, as well as strip-tilling as far as Kaikoura.

"The strip-till has its place; interest in it has really grown."

Mayfield contractor and

arable farmer James Doyle says grain and milling wheat yields are similar to last year in Mid Canterbury, while peas, grass seed and brassicas have performed better.

"We've had a lot better weather this harvest, but we still have about half of our spring cereal to go.

"We are a bit back on feed

wheat and barley; quite a few of our clients have replaced that with peas or milling wheat."

Doyle sights reduced market demand and lower prices for feed grain for the increase in milling wheat crops.

"Milling wheat is well over a hundred bucks more than feed wheat barley, so people are putting in milling wheat instead."

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## Attitude leads to altitude

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

Rakaia-based Ravensdown agri-manager Shiloh Mould says she was a 'townie' before Geraldine High School teacher Sarah Foley-Smith ignited her passion for agriculture.

"Sarah is one of the pivotal people in my life.

"In terms of people who have shaped my career, she was definitely the first and most dominant throughout my life," Mould says

Mould studied agriculture through Geraldine High School's Primary Industry Academy (PIA), which gives students practical and theory-based farming knowledge.

"It covers everything from propagation, tractor driving, water supply, fencing, and you do these really cool farm visits.

"I don't know what we haven't done with PIA."

After high school, Mould knew she wanted to pursue a career in agriculture but was still determining which direction she wanted to follow.

Mould studied for a Bachelor of Agriculture at Lincoln University to keep her options open.

"I chose that because it was quite broad.

"I knew I loved forestry, arable, and sheep and beef, but I didn't know exactly how I would fit into that."

Mould found her career path when she was accepted into Ravensdown's graduate programme after finishing her degree.

Following the graduate programme, Mould was placed as an agri-manager in Morrinsville before landing a position two years ago on her home turf of Mid Canterbury.

Mould said being female hasn't been an issue in her career and that currently, around 80 per



Geraldine High School's Primary Industry Academy kick-started a career in agriculture for Ravensdown agri-manager Shiloh Mould.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

cent of central South Island Ravensdown agri-managers are women, showing the sector is open to gender diversity.

"The biggest challenge would have been getting over the fear of giving it a go.

"The farmers are so open; they aren't the big, scary farmers you think they are.

"They're welcoming and respectful."

Mould says that when it comes to forging a successful career, "attitude is altitude."

"We are never expected to be encyclopaedias; you are never expected to know everything.

"If you don't know something, go find out.

"Work ethic is important, just getting back to people on time and doing the job you are meant to."

Mould's work area stretches across Mid Canterbury, from Geraldine to Sheffield, through to the Rakaia Gorge and out to the coast, meaning she can enjoy the changing Canterbury landscape and has a diverse range of customers across all farming sectors on her books.

For Mould, though, helping farmers and making a difference on their farm gives her the most

satisfaction.

"Farmers are awesome. They are vets, sparkies, plumbers, everything under the sun.

"To talk to someone with that much knowledge and experience is just so cool.

"So the fact that I get to communicate with multiple farmers on a daily basis is the most rewarding part for me."



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# RURAL RECHARGE

Take a smoko break for mental health

## Doing mental health right

In my line of work, I see people at their best and worst. It can be challenging and gradual but being a part of the experience of fundamental change within someone suffering from mental health challenges, is the most rewarding experience I can think of. I have spent nine years trying to bring the topic of rural mental health out in to the open and trying to understand and create solutions to the problem. This has included multiple degrees and original masters research on the topic – and now on to a PhD, along with working on the ground with this population as a registered counsellor.

If there is one important fact that I have learned on this journey, it is that when it comes to rural mental health initiatives, we are often missing the mark. It's an emotional topic, and I had to dig deep to think about how to elucidate such an important message in a way that will be heard. What we often see and read in the media and other places, positions poor rural mental health in the realm of older farm owners, with concerns around financial pressure and weather as being the biggest risk factor.

While these factors are legitimate, serious, distressing,

and even more relevant in other countries, research shows that it is in fact mostly our young men – under 40, in farm labouring/shepherd positions that are head and shoulders our most at-risk population in agriculture. The main reasons for suicide in this population consisted of existing mental illness, relationship break ups, interpersonal conflict, and physical injury, all potentially exacerbated by separation from family/support networks, alcohol intoxication and easy access to firearms. Financial concerns accounted for less than 5% of farm suicides in all age groups across the agricultural workforce in New Zealand.

Because this topic (rightly) creates public concern, it is worth considering that many rural mental health initiatives are based on inaccurate suppositions around age and other demographics. It is also worth noting that in New Zealand, while there are just under 50,000 farms, and therefore the maximum amount of potential farm owners, there are 143,000 people employed in agriculture that are paid a wage or salary and are not the farm owners.

To address this concern properly, we must train our attention on to young, rural men,



We need to train our attention to men under forty, Kathryn Wright says.

under 40 years of age, especially those who may already suffer from depression or other mental illness, particularly if he has just experienced a relationship break up, had a disagreement with his boss, is not near to his family, or is in chronic physical pain. This is definitely not to say that they are the only population to experience poor mental health and suicide, but they most certainly make up the bulk of the negative statistics, so it makes sense to investigate and target mental health initiatives in this direction.

We must locate initiatives

within our rural communities to address and support ALL rural people, but especially our young men. Community groups such as Young Farmers, Surfing for Farmers, dog trial clubs and sporting clubs are absolutely imperative to preserve and protect good mental health and wellbeing through social connection. Health and social support services are also important – however isolation may render these as being some distance away from this at-risk population, so this is much more difficult to address.

Becoming aware of what signs and symptoms of mental distress to watch for in young rural men and what to do, could not only save a life but could be the catalyst between a good and bad employer. Any employer or peer that can read the signs of poor mental health and know what to do, is more likely to offer a positive working environment, and hold on to staff for longer as they will feel valued and listened to. I have advocated for on-farm training for such an initiative before, and I dearly hope to see a relevant agency step up and provide this much-needed training. It would be beneficial to everyone.

This is an important topic, and it's absolutely crucial that we do this right by looking at what the research tells us, listening to the professionals working at the coal face of rural mental health, and homing in on the most vulnerable population in agriculture. This is more nuanced than taking any old mental health advice being delivered by people with only a lived experience, or from what they think is a good idea.

The life of a young shepherd is just as precious as the life of the owner of the farm he works on.

– By Kathryn Wright,  
counsellor

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S E R V I N G F A R M E R S S I N C E 1 9 6 2



# An incredible journey

Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each month we shine a spotlight on a young farmer. Today we chat to **AMY ANDERSON** from Pendarves Young Farmers Club.

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

I am a member of Pendarves Young Farmers Club. I joined the club in December 2022 and became club secretary in November. I have loved every minute of my role so far and my involvement in the club as a whole.

**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?**

The highlight for me from joining Young Farmers had to be attending grand final season 55. It was great to go and support Peter O'Conner, a member of the Pendarves club, as well as all the other participants. I loved getting to see such a huge group of people all ecstatic with the outcome and Emma Poole making history being the first female to win FMG young farmer of the year.

Joining young farmers has benefited me massively with the friendships I've made and has

truly made New Zealand my new home. Attending fundraisers and various trips has helped me become part of the local community and increased my confidence massively with public speaking and trying new things. Becoming club secretary helped improve my communication skills and has had me talking with some truly incredible people I may not have met otherwise.

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

The honest answer to this question is that I went out on a whim. Up until I was 14 I had dreamed of being a midwife, I always loved biology in school and watched Call The Midwife religiously despite my parents' annoyance. However, after not doing as well as I hoped in school and hating being inside all day I decided to give dairy a go. I grew up in rural England and had a farming family who, up until 2019, had only been beef and sheep farmers. There were multiple dairies in my area and I had always loved watching the cows come in for milking. Around



Amy Anderson.

the time I was considering joining the industry the dairy farm in the village was put up for sale and after some deliberation my cousins bought it, getting me my first milking job. I learnt alongside them how to run a dairy farm, we milked 80 cows in an 8/16 herringbone parlour, with original milk jars and no fancy technology, it was certainly an experience

for us all. From there my mum pushed me to go to college where I did a level 3 advanced technical diploma in agriculture at Reaseheath, a three-year course with a placement year in the middle. During my placement year I moved to a different county and milked 800 cows on an organic autumn calving system. I did some calf rearing, grass management, got a foot trimming and ai qualification, some machinery work and attended discussion groups. I stayed with that family for two years whilst completing my college diploma and I learnt a lot from them. Jonathan and Alistair my bosses there had both worked for my current boss Tom, eight years prior and pushed me to come to New Zealand which I am forever grateful for. After a very quick phone call to Tom, I did exactly as he said, I booked my flight and got a visa with no idea what I was coming to just that I had a job and a place to live.

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

I now manage young stock at Henbook Farms Ltd, a 1500 cow spring calving farm with 360 hectares in Dorie, with a 70-point rotary with no automatic cup removers.

My role is to rear all stock up to point of calving or two years of age, I do all the calf rearing solo feeding once a day and manage the young stock block, moving fences, making a grazing plan, running irrigation and feeding out when needed.

My journey so far has been nothing less than incredible, to have travelled to the other side of the world at 19 alone and learnt a whole new way of farming has truly solidified my dreams of being in the industry and my future career. I was only meant to come to New Zealand for one year but within two weeks I was telling my family I want to move here permanently. It has been amazing to then have my parents come to visit and understand why I fell in love with not only my job but this country as a whole. They have been so supportive with my plans.

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Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Ltd Regional Manager Upper North Island says manufacturer De Sangosse took their industry leading Metarex® Inov slug bait and made it environmentally friendly. "You could say it's been 'betterised.'"

He says the result, Ironmax Pro, treads very gently on the earth without losing anything in terms of potency. "That's a significant achievement. It's BioGro certified and offers the best of both worlds."

IPM-friendly, Ironmax Pro is proven to have limited impact on beneficials including earthworms, and the slug predator carabid beetle. It's also safer around stock, companion animals, and farm dogs.

Pieter is quick to add that the baby hasn't been thrown out with the bathwater. "Metarex Inov still has a lot of dedicated advocates. Ironmax Pro is another string to the slug-protection bow, providing an equably viable

option for those who choose a more sustainable path."

He says up-take of Ironmax Pro has been strong, particularly in the Waikato. "Some of the prominent rural contractors and farmers got on board and then the floodgates opened. It's been really well received." Pieter says this was during a very challenging season for the region, with elevated slug pressure due to intermittent rain and high humidity. "The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. People have called to say they've seen almost instant results."

The De Sangosse sustainability credentials run deep.

The high tech De Sangosse factory in France, uses up to 33% green electricity, and achieves a 50% energy saving on lighting, by using natural light and LED's. It is also completely dust free. What is even more remarkable is the fact that the whole factory is run by only nine staff.

"De Sangosse definitely walks the talk - Ironmax Pro even comes in a double lined paper bag which is practical and better for the environment!"

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Juvenile slug feeding on Ironmax Pro.

oil seed rape molecules. 20 plant species were initially evaluated by scientists and 50 potential molecules identified based on their appeal to slugs. Two extraordinarily attractive and palatable molecules were selected in the end. These facilitate rapid detection by slugs and enhance Ironmax Pro's taste and how quickly Ironmax Pro works compared to other slug and snail baits.

The research showed slugs actually actively prefer feeding on Ironmax Pro to feeding on seedlings. Pieter adds that it's a myth that juveniles won't ingest on the bait. "All slugs and snails can, and will, feed on it!"

relation brown field slugs (*Deroceras invadens*) have the potential to wipe out entire crops. Their mottled colour and night feeding enables them to go largely unnoticed.

But their effects don't.

Travelling up to 13 metres in one night, slugs are phenomenal feeders - capable of consuming more than 50% of their own body weight. Unprotected, damage to plants - especially seedlings - can happen surprisingly quickly. "Infestations can appear seemingly out of the blue. Population explosions are common as the pests are capable of producing 300 eggs in their 13-month lifespan."

Slugs get off to a fast start, feeding immediately after hatching. They reach sexual maturity at three to nine months of age, beginning as males, then becoming females. Cross-fertilisation is most usual, but self-fertilisation is not unknown.

Keeping soil well cultivated does help with slug and snail control. However, it's not an absolute solution. Even if ground has been worked thoroughly, nearby areas (around streams, and along fences and hedges) allow slugs to find safe refuge. From there, they can move out to feed on vulnerable plants and seedlings.

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# Surprising health benefits from diverse grazing trial

By Sharon Davis

Researchers at Lincoln University have found that offering a smorgasbord of diverse grazing has benefits for animals and farmers, as well as follow-on health benefits for people who consume meat from the animals.

Professor Pablo Gregorini and post graduate researcher Dr Anita Fleming discovered a clear link between a new grazing management approach for cattle and significant health benefits for humans.

The pair found that cattle allowed to choose their own diet by grazing from a selection of five separate strips of monoculture plant species gained weight faster and had a better meat colour than cows on conventional ryegrass-based pasture, red clover pasture or cattle grazing a complex multispecies mixture.

The cows were allowed to selectively graze on strips of rye grass, lucerne, red clover, plantain and chicory for about 90 days.

The researchers then tested the blood of people who consumed meat from the cattle in the form

of beef patties over a six-week period.

"The results were compelling. Our health reflects the way we graze our animals," said Gregorini.

Blood samples taken from the trial participants who ate the beef showed an increase in vitamin E, which acts as a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.

The samples also had higher levels of enzymes and aminoacids that lower total cholesterol and help build muscle and tissue and keep blood vessels open, he said.

Our research demonstrates the beneficial human health outcomes of eating higher-welfare food products.

"It's not enough simply to say, we are what we eat. In fact, we are what we eat eats."

Gregorini said this was the first study of its kind that looks at the cause and effect of food.

The study effectively says if you eat this, it will be reflected in your blood and in your health.

"If you eat better your health will be better," he said.

Fleming said a relatively

modest on-farm investment could give farmers productivity gains and meet a growing demand for healthy and ethical food production.

"Our research shows that by simply planting pasture in monoculture strips of common plant species that are already widely available, and allowing the animals to graze freely - to have 'functional choice' - farmers will not only enhance the welfare of their stock, including increased weight gain rates, but will also realise greater value from their product.

"More than ever, domestic and international consumers are demanding food products that are healthy and ethically and sustainably grown."

The grazing system would give farmers the competitive advantage of marketing a product that promotes human health and enhances animal welfare while at the same time safeguarding the environment, she said.

The Lincoln research team has also conducted trials with dairy cows, sheep and deer using a diverse strip grazing system and found similar

results in animal performance, environmental impact and welfare, including a reduction in nitrogen excretion.

A human trial with the test subjects eating lamb has recently finished with the results still pending but Gregorini expects similar "or even better" results than the beef study.

The performance of lambs on the strip-feed system was 22% better than on other grasses, he said.

For milk on strip-grazed dairy cows the improvement was between 8 - 10%.

The world-first study was funded by Lincoln University's Centre of Excellence, Silver Fern Farms and Fertilizer New Zealand.

Gregorini hopes to source funding for human trials with milk and venison from animals on the strip pasture system. The venison would be of particular interest as the deer feeding off strip pastures had higher differences in metabolites that related to better brain development in foetuses, as well as the reduction of cancer and diabetes.



Professor Pablo Gregorini has discovered that human health is affected by the way we graze our animals.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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# Changing the narrative

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

Sam Spencer-Bowers' family has farmed Claxby at Eyrewell since Sam's great-grandfather Marmaduke Dixon arrived from Lincolnshire in 1852.

Dixon's descendants farmed sheep and beef on the property for the next four generations until Sam came home to the farm with his wife, Jo.

With the same pioneering spirit of his great-grandfather, Sam bravely changed the farming system to dairy in 2012 to ensure the

operation remained viable.

"It was very scary because my family were pretty staunch sheep and beef farmers.

"But the economics just meant it was the right thing to do."

Sam and Jo had spent a small amount of time on dairy farms and attended Lincoln University, where Jo says they learned "the bare minimum" about dairy farming, so there was much to learn.

Being the fifth generation on the farm also came with a certain amount of pressure.

"Dairy wasn't our background," Sam said. "And you feel like you are being judged;

with a long family farming history, people think you should know what you are doing.

"We definitely felt the pressure and wanted to get things right."

The conversion of the 1400-hectare property was staggered, with the first unit converted in 2012, and by 2016, three dairy units were operational, with around 1000 cows each and a dairy support farm down the road.

The conversions coincided with the arrival of the Spencer-Bowers' two daughters, Chloe and Ruby.

"I was literally in labour trying to organise houses for the new conversion," Jo said.

"We don't always make things easy for ourselves."

Sam said a lot of lessons were learned the hard way and that dairying continues to become more complex.

"It continues to become more complicated mainly around environmental stuff, but also animal welfare.

"With public perception, it continues to get more difficult, but that's why we wanted to enter the Ballance Farm Awards and open up our farm to visits. We want to add a bit of truth in there."

The Spencer-Bowers participated in Open Farms last year and have regular farm visits from the agri-science class from St Andrews College.

Te Koromiko Swannanoa School, of which Ruby attends and is third generation, is much more urban than in Sam's day and the Spencer-Bowers regularly have visits from the school pupils.

Often, as many parents turn up for farm visits as children.

The Spencer-Bowers provide calves, milk and meal for the schools' Seeds of Learning agriculture program.

"If we can do our bit for our local patch, that's a good start," Sam said "If every farm did that for their local school, you'd cover the whole country."

Claxby Farms has also welcomed visitors for Fonterra Farm open gate days, and recently, delegates from across the globe visited as part of the Asian Seed Congress.

"We want people to come in and understand it rather than just read about it.

"The public are very good with opinions when they haven't even been on the farm, so we are trying to provide that opportunity where we can."

Sam says Claxby Farms are far from perfect, and he understands some people may not agree with their approach.

"We do the best that we can, and we always strive to do better.

"As new technologies come, we always look at how we can implement them into the business."

Variable rate irrigation is one thing on Sam's wish list, but he says he can't quite get the business case across the line for it yet.

"There's plenty of technology we would like to implement, but it has to stack up financially."

Fourteen years after the first conversion, Sam says they are in "a pretty good spot" with the farm system.

"We just focus on efficiency and doing things well.

"There's still plenty of things to keep doing on the farm, but I think that pretty much goes on forever."



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Delegates from around the globe visited Claxby Farms as part of the Asian Seed Congress. PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

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# Manager pleads guilty to mistreating dairy cows

By Sharon Davis

A Mid Canterbury farm manager has pleaded guilty to mistreating nearly 140 dairy cows and failing to provide them with medical attention following damage to their tails - including one cow with a tail so badly damaged it fell off.

The man, who has interim name suppression, initially pleaded not guilty to failing to comply with the Animal Welfare

Act between June 2020 and January 2022 when he appeared in court in November 2023.

However, he changed his plea after the Ministry for Primary Industries withdrew a charge of mistreatment of 53 cows between December 2021 and January 2022.

He pleaded guilty to three charges which each have a maximum sentence of 12 months in jail or a \$50,000 fine.

He admitted to failing to

ensure 137 dairy cows under his care were handled in a way that minimised the likelihood of unreasonable pain or distress between June 2020 and December 2021 - and failing to ensure that the 137 cows with tail injuries were given adequate care and medical treatment.

He also admitted to failing to provide medical care for seven cows with broken or damaged tails.

According to the charge sheet, six of the cows' tails had to be amputated, while the tail of one cow fell off.

At the man's last appearance his lawyer, Jennifer North, asked for interim name suppression.

She said the man was working on a different farm in the district and his employer was aware of the charges. However, she argued there was a "real risk to the current farm's reputation" if the man's details

were made public.

On Monday, she asked Judge Dominic Dravitzki to continue the interim name suppression and not to enter convictions to allow for an application for a discharge without conviction.

The judge remanded the farm manager's case to March 18 and continued his name suppression.

The issue of name suppression will be considered again at sentencing.

## Farmgate milk price hike is good news

By Sharon Davis

Fonterra has given dairy farmers some good news with a 30c increase in its forecast average farmgate milk price.

This brings the milk price to 20c below the May 2023 average forecast.

On February 12 the dairy co-operative lifted its forecast farmgate milk price to an

effective midpoint payment of \$7.80 per kilogram of milk solids (kgms).

Dorie dairy farmer Mark Cressey said the increase was "very good news" and would take "some pressure" off dairy farmers.

"We're seeing demand increasing from the Middle East and a little bit of demand coming back from China."

Cressey said operations would

still be tight for some farmers because of inflation. While the price of fertiliser had come down, other costs - such as feed - had gone up and stayed up.

Three years ago \$8 would have been a good payout. If it gets to \$8 this year, it will be sustainable, he said.

In May last year Fonterra's average forecast was \$8.00/kgms. But the mid-point price

was slashed to \$6.75 in August due to a flagging global market. The cut put a squeeze on farmers and took the milk price below breakeven for many dairy farms.

In October, the price inched up by 50c and by another 25c in December to \$7.50.

The forecast range for the season is now \$7.30-\$8.30/kgms thanks to stronger global

demand.

Fonterra chief executive Miles Hurrell said global dairy trade prices had improved by 10% since Fonterra's price update in December.

However, the "potential impact of geopolitical instability and supply chain disruption" on demand from key importing regions remained uncertain, he said.

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# Another look at farm safety

Back in the springtime I wrote about farm safety and the mindset on how we are best to approach constantly improving our skills and focus to reduce everyday jobs becoming inherently dangerous if multiple factors begin to stack up against us.

Sadly around Christmas time there was a pretty horrific run of people having accidents around New Zealand involving ATV and UTV vehicles on farms.

If you were one of those affected or are family or friends close to one, my thoughts are with you.

What was good to see during that time was many people coming together in support of victims and their families and friends, and to urgently remind others to be more cautious as we all go about our business to hopefully prevent further tragedy happening. To those that stepped up thank you.

Predictably though there was the usual patterns that do need to change in how we react to these accidents.

The first is reporting by media, almost every time there's an accident involving a vehicle, key details are incorrect.

It's almost as if the default response is to refer to any crash as involving an ATV, and a poorly chosen stock image also adds poor context.

The second is the calls that come from some working in the



The Transport Accident Investigation Commission has been instrumental in reducing agricultural aviation accidents.

farm safety space that repeat their usual hand wringing and suggesting for either outright bans of machines or to spend money on bolt on attachments (that manufacturers and other experts discourage), or majorly restrict where and how machines can be used on a farm. While all good intentioned, I think when we boil all that down that mindset is only putting a sticking plaster on the core issue and isn't going to bring the fundamental culture shift to make some real progress.

As an example I heard of someone who had rolled a UTV

(side by side) on a hill in a pretty tame grass paddock, with the key factor being wet grass.

The machine was equipped with a key that limits the top speed of the UTV and the experienced farm worker ended up losing traction, going into a slide and because they couldn't fully accelerate out of it, the result was a roll over.

Thankfully aside from some damage to the UTV there were no injuries, however they felt given their skill and reaction the roll over would have been avoided if the safety device wasn't limiting.

One of the other discussions I

read was from a sharemilker who was going to restrict their farm speeds even further, and restrict where motorbikes were allowed to go and was lamenting they couldn't get staff sent to training courses until well after Christmas. The solution here was to all come together on farm and train each other on the specific areas of concern, it's one of our collective duties as an industry to always be upskilling ourselves and each other.

Not just for where we work currently, but for where staff and even managers may end up in the future.

A rising tide lifts all ships! As an industry another area we can improve on would be to implement a system where all serious accidents are investigated and reported, with all causes identified so operators can implement any findings and learnings to all move forward.

The status quo is that, if anything, all we hear is how big the fine was from Worksafe after they crucify the farm owner in court down the track.

If we look at the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) which does this for the aviation, marine and rail industries; their mission is to determine the circumstances and causes of accidents with a view to avoiding similar occurrences in the future, rather than to ascribe blame to any person.

Their website is a great resource as it accurately reports all accidents lodged with basic details, and then further details down the track once an investigation is completed. Particularly in the case of Agricultural Aviation they've been instrumental in reducing accidents over the years as they've ensured pilots, aircraft, techniques and risk management continued to improve.



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# Diversity in agribusiness crucial to meet challenges

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

Although many women hold leadership positions within the primary sector, Regen founder and Crop X chief sustainability officer Bridgit Hawkins believes there is still a gender gap in senior leadership roles in agribusinesses.

"There are some amazing women who have senior roles in the industry, and there is a bit more happening all the time.

"I just think that it's not enough, not fast enough and not necessarily in a place where the most impact can happen," Hawkins says.

Hawkins, who holds a master's degree in Agricultural Science, founded Fields of Change to help drive generational change and champion, celebrate and elevate female leaders and advocate for their advancement to senior roles in the agriculture sector.

Although around 50 per cent of agricultural science graduates in New Zealand are women, Hawkins says they are missing from senior leadership roles in the sector.

"If you look at where the capital

in the sector rests, it's in large cooperatives and companies.

"If you look at the leadership, the CEOs and the leadership teams – not the boards, but the people that are doing the work, forming strategies and executing them, except for Tanya Houghton, CEO of Farmlands, they are almost all exclusively men."

Hawkins says that many women are in traditionally female leadership roles in support areas such as human resources and marketing in agribusinesses; the pathway from those departments to senior positions is unlikely.

"No one gets to be a CEO if they ran human resources."

Hawkins said the opportunity lies not in diversity quotas but in creating active pathways for women.

"We are not going to do it unless we build a bench, and we aren't doing that."

Women often take career 'breaks' to have a family, which usually falls at a pivotal time in a woman's professional career when women are likely to miss out on professional development or promotional opportunities.

Hawkins believes the sector needs to be more proactive



Bridgit Hawkins says there are not enough women holding senior positions in agribusinesses, and that agricultural companies and cooperatives should be creating pathways for women.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

about encouraging and investing in women returning to the workforce.

"I'm not aware of any organisations in the primary sector that proactively say, 'How do we bring this cohort back up? How do we invest in them more?'"

"We need to work with

companies and say, 'If your intent is to get women into more functional parts of the business, how do you build programmes that will achieve that over time?'"

Hawkins believes that women are more likely to steer clear of careers in science, technology,

engineering and mathematics (STEM) due to not being able to anticipate an advanced career due to the 'glass ceiling'.

"They can't see themselves having a fulfilling career path and not actually battling against invisible status quo pressures."

Hawkins said being the minority in a room full of men can be daunting and not often an experience men have to endure if roles were reversed.

"Men hardly ever get to experience it the other way around, to be the minority on a gender basis.

"If you add in ethnicity, it becomes even harder."

With what Bridget describes as 'enormous' problems facing the primary sector, having diversity in leadership means unique perspectives and approaches that lead to more creative and effective solutions.

"To understand all the different ways you could approach a challenge, you need people to come at it with different perspectives, which comes from being different.

"So different lived experiences, including gender, ethnicity, age and sector experience."

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# International Women's Day

By Charlotte Connoley,  
New Zealand Grain, Seed and  
Trade Association president  
Kings Seeds general manager

## Why is it so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

If women are participating within an industry then they should be represented throughout all levels of the sector. When I first began in the seed industry there were very few women with roles in the sector. Twenty years later that is no longer the case and in fact for the seed industry we are finding engagement from females not only on the increase but possibly superseding the males in some areas. Over the past two years all applicants for our seed industry scholarship have been solely from females. Our Women in Seed conference now supersedes our annual conference in attendance numbers. There are still challenges with female representation in senior management, executive and board roles throughout the primary sector but this is changing and will continue to evolve as women feel more confident that we can add value at all levels and are recognised for this.

**What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?**

Let's be clear, having a family is not an obstacle to having a successful career in the primary sector. The obstacle is employers who don't take a long-term view to creating opportunities and therefore loyalty from female employees. We all know the cost to recruit is far greater than the cost to retain great employees even when taking into consideration some flexible years whilst creating a family. I was fortunate enough to have a fabulous employer in South Pacific Seeds whilst we had our three boys and they got 20 years of my service as a result. Employers have to consider the long game when it comes to attracting female talent within the industry as it is guaranteed they will be snapped up by more progressive industries if we don't.

Have more transparent conversations as employees and employers. As a female in the primary sector don't be afraid to ask your employer how the company may accommodate your role when you have a family. Whilst these conversations can be awkward and hard to have, better to know now that you're working for an employer that has a progressive view to finding solutions around biology than to waste years with an employer that won't support you.

**What advice would you have for women who are wanting**

**to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?**

Someone once said to me to marry well and whilst I guess that still stands true I think the relevant essence of it in today's modern world is more around having a strong support network around you. Support to manage the many hats you may wear in particular if having a family is one of those, but also professionally.

Use your professional smarts in your personal life and find creative solutions. To deal with school holidays a group of 4 other Mums and I are each going to have all our kids on one day of the week. It then means that over the course of the holidays I only need to take two days of leave and get 8 days of care for the kids free of charge!

Seek out like-minded individuals, female or male, through business events, mentorships, networking opportunities and grow your professional village.

I don't believe in work life balance as feel this is just another unachievable target which adds pressure to already overloaded females. Instead I believe everything has its season and the balance will ebb and flow throughout the week and the year. Focus on enjoyment – and having overall satisfaction throughout a week or year rather than trying to juggle it all.



  
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Jo Metcalf



# Celebrate our role models

By Tanya Houghton,  
Chief Executive Officer, Farmlands

## Why is it so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

The Ministry for Primary Industry statistics show that the current gender ratio in NZ's food and fibre industry is 65:35 in favour of men.

Obviously, women aren't as well-represented as they could be.

Agriculture offers career options for anyone interested in science, marketing and branding, and women should be taking their fair share of these great roles. It'll help to break down some of the traditional sex-related job silos, many of which offer their mainly female workers lower pay and fewer opportunities.

Plus working in agriculture is a really important way for young people to contribute to righting climate change and wahine need to be part of this.

Increasingly our agri workforce is becoming female, whether on-farm or in the teams providing on-farm support and services. Younger women need to see we are a sector which can provide them with long-term career paths, ensuring we can attract and retain great talent. Increasingly a predictor of future success is the talent a business, organisation or sector attracts, and NZ agri needs to show that it is a place that women can thrive.

It's a fact that long term success and innovation requires diversity of thought, experience, and approach. The best way to achieve that is with a diverse team. When we have women in leadership positions, we naturally create environments of greater diversity. Where it is safer to challenge the status quo and think outside the square.

## What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?

Old-school attitudes about physical strength and aptitude - talk openly about the resistance women will face from some of the small pockets of opposition that exists in our sector. Provide the tools and support networks to build the resilience needed.

Lack of role models - find the stories of women doing amazing things and celebrate them - showing others what is possible.

Real or perceived lack of flexibility in lifestyles and locations - consciously create solutions which keep women working in the sector through particular stages of their lives i.e. becoming a parent- provide good options for more flexible working.

## What advice would you have for women who are wanting to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?

Best piece of advice ever - say yes to all the opportunities that are presented to you, and hunt down the ones you want. Don't wait to be "ready", give it a go and work it out. Have faith and confidence in your ability to learn on the job.

# Women not just 'doing the books'

By Nicola Grigg  
Minister for Trade, Associate  
Agriculture (Horticulture) and Women

## 1. Why is so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

Women's representation in leadership is always a positive thing, particularly for the primary industry - but leadership comes in many forms, across many platforms. Farming couples will know it is increasingly the woman in the relationship who shoulders the burden of leadership. Throughout my life, I've so often come across highly qualified, highly capable women on-farm who invariably describe their role as 'just doing the books'. In reality though, that often means they're the accountant, the auditor, the HR manager, the legal advisor, the farm environment planner, the nutrient budgeter, the stock agent liaison, the business development manager, the calf (and child!) rearer, the cook, the cleaner etc! As International Women's Day approaches, I encourage anyone who knows one of these maestros to acknowledge and celebrate them.

The breakthrough successes across the wider sector are a biproduct of innovation and adaptation, which women in leadership positions often facilitate. More than this, female leaders across the primary industry serve as role models for younger women and girls who can learn and grow from the triumphs of others. My motivation for entering politics was to bring a rural woman's voice to Parliament to ensure this perspective is considered across a range of policies and initiatives. As the recently-appointed Minister for Women, Minister of State for Trade, and Associate Minister for Agriculture, I'm thrilled to now be in a position to influence positive change. Women bring a different perspective to problem solving and can navigate through challenging situations with efficiency, rationality and, importantly, we do this collaboratively. If my role serves to motivate more women to enter politics or leadership roles, then I will consider that a huge success.

## 2. What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?

There are many systematic and societal barriers that affect women attaining (and retaining) leadership roles in the primary industry - as there are in politics too - including financial, educational, and gender-based obstacles. The leadership



role women play in raising a family is one such barrier. As a new mother myself, I am navigating the demands of being a first-time mum and Minister of the Crown, as well as an electoral MP. While all three of these roles are nothing but an enormous privilege, they are, at times, utterly exhausting! The support of partners, family, political colleagues and, of course, other women who've 'been there' cannot be underestimated for people like me. Powerful woman who overcome obstacles create pathways for those that follow - and I am lucky to be able to follow in the footsteps of other rural, female MPS such as Ruth Richardson and Dame Jenny Shipley who've managed the juggle. Each year there are more opportunities that arise within the primary industry where woman can thrive, and the sector can succeed, but this will only eventuate by women being supported and empowered to capitalise on the chances at hand, and by taking risks.

## 3. What advice would you have for women who are wanting to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?

It is an exciting time for the primary industry, and for women involved in - what I view as - New Zealand's most exciting industry. As I've already noted, it is important to always have a support network around you. Make the most of those who can act as your mentor because many women who have acquired a leadership position, have benefitted from mentorship, and understand the value of providing this to others. Have trust in yourself to lean into things that are outside of your comfort zone and, above all, do not be deterred by perceived failures, but rather, see them as learnings.

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# Women bring different thinking to agriculture

By Kate Acland,  
Beef + Lamb NZ Chairperson

## Why is so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

Women are such an important part of the primary sector at all levels, right from the young shepherds on the ground starting out, through to the huge number of incredibly talented women we have in support areas and farming partnerships – so it's important that women are also represented in leadership positions.

I am a big believer in the saying "you have to see it to be it" which talks to the importance of role models. With so many women holding leadership roles in the primary sector and also achieving great things, be it winning young farmers competitions, managing large stations or achieving farm ownership – telling the story of these multiple successes is powerful.

## What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?

I think attitudes have changed and for the most part women have every opportunity to succeed in

agricultural roles.

We need to get better at illustrating the career pathway for all of our young people in agriculture, a practical on-farm base can be a fantastic launching pad for a huge number of careers and, the training and education options are becoming increasingly flexible for people who want to work while they train.

We need the smartest young women (and men!) for our sector to thrive into the future so we need to make sure those people can see a place for themselves in agriculture.

## What advice would have for women who are wanting to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?

So often as women we are our own worst enemies, we think of all of the reasons why we wouldn't be perfect for a role or a position and often don't take the risk and put ourselves out there.

Regardless of the role, as a women you bring a unique and valuable perspective, a different way of thinking and problem solving to any role or situation, so back yourself, be prepared to fail but be ready to get back out there and try again – because that's the attitude that will make you succeed.



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# What are you waiting for?

By Emma Poole,  
20223 FMG Young Farmer  
of the Year

## Why is so important for women to be represented in the primary industry?

Like any industry, diversity in the work force brings different people with different skills. In agriculture, and farming in particular, you need a range of skills to complete the tasks at hand – which both men and women deliver in different ways. In terms of representation, there are so many wonderful women out there already involved in the industry, but they are often behind the farm gate putting in the hard work and not necessarily in the spotlight! That's why this win has been such an amazing opportunity for me as I have been able to help shine the spotlight on the wonderful work that is already being done.

## What obstacles are there for women in agriculture, and how can we remove those obstacles?

The biggest obstacle is often yourself. If you are willing to put yourself out there and give things a go most people will admire that and give you a chance. Giving woman confidence by encouraging and supporting one another is how we will progress forward and remove those obstacles.

## What advice would you have for young women who want to give the FMG Young Farmer of the Year a try?

What are you waiting for?! The first time I ever competed I was so nervous and thought I would make a fool out of myself. Turns out no one cares as much as you do! A few years down the track and here I am talking to the media off the back of winning the contest. Get out there and get stuck in and you will be surprised what you know/can achieve.



Emma Poole 20223 FMG Young Farmer of the Year.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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# We need to continue to build women's confidence

By Keri Johnston, Irrigation NZ chairperson

## Why is it so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

The primary sector is facing a changing future. Our markets are changing, the environment is changing, geopolitics is changing. It has been shown that when women are empowered to lead, everyone benefits. Decades of studies show women leaders help increase productivity, enhance collaboration, inspire organisational dedication, and improve fairness. Our primary sector needs new thinking and strategies. Status quo attitudes and resources are holding us back from what could be an amazing future for our sector. Women get that and create and promote a whole different mindset and have an appetite and readiness that undoubtedly has a positive impact on our sector.

## What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?

In my experience, women are more likely to have "imposter syndrome" than male counterparts who are more assertive (generally). We like to be ready and this means having the confidence in our knowledge and skills to do a job. We need to continue to build confidence in women and encourage them to look at the opportunities that are out there. Sometimes, it is just about taking that first step – action over perfection. Women in leadership positions can also provide support and mentoring for other women – inspiring them and showing them what is possible.

## What advice would you have for women who are wanting to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?

Network, network, network – create a support network around you and make genuine connections with industry colleagues and leaders. These relationships are invaluable. And find a mentor – and this doesn't necessarily have to be another woman, but someone whose expertise and qualities you respect and can help you advance your career.



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# Challenging stereotypes

By Kate Truffitt,  
Chief Executive Officer  
Potatoes New Zealand

## Why is so important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry?

It is important for women to hold leadership positions in the primary industry to foster diversity of thought, promote inclusivity, and harness a broader range of skills and perspectives, ultimately driving innovation, sustainability, and the overall success of the industry.

## What obstacles are there for women in agricultural roles, and how can we remove those obstacles?

Women in agriculture can face obstacles such as lack of visibility of opportunities, unconscious gender biases, and limited information. Removing these barriers involves implementing inclusive policies, ensuring access to information and training, challenging typical agricultural stereotypes, actively encouraging women into leadership positions, and establishing supportive networks and mentorship programs within the agricultural sector.

## What advice would have for women who are wanting to rise through the ranks and advance their career in agriculture?



For women aspiring to progress in their agricultural careers, I recommend understanding the opportunities in front of you, building a strong support network with mentors, continuously seek learning opportunities, view challenges as avenues for personal growth, and showcase your skills and accomplishments. Engage in industry events, establish a professional identity (brand), and contribute to discussions on gender diversity in agriculture to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

## Can my joints improve? (Part 2)

Last edition I mentioned a client who went from having very sore knees to know being able to move with much greater freedom. We looked at the first lesson we can learn from this. All healing comes from specific healing systems in our body. We also saw that these healing systems can be restricted or even dormant if our diets tip the scales in the wrong direction.

The second lesson is very important. The distance between healing and continued disease is often much less than you think. What surprised my client is how little he had to do to activate the healing capacity in his knees.

The first step is to slow or stop unwanted inflammation. This does mean you need to think about foods but in most cases it is simply substituting one food for another. This



can be swapping the inflammatory high omega 6 cooking oils for olive oil and adding fish oil supplements. The rest of his programme was not difficult. I started him on an initially high dose of my Joint formula.

This meant that initially he was getting 1600mg of high grade (small molecular size) chondroitin sulphate with 1600 mg of glucosamine sulphate and 400mg of 100% water soluble Curcumin (from turmeric) extract.

Chondroitin is the most important as it directly improves the health of cells that repair and maintain cartilage. Curcumin targeted inflammation while glucosamine helped with joint function. Yes, there is the discipline of having to take the supplements and of course fitting these into his budget. The results meant he has much less pain and more mobility.

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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John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

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# Catchment group works to reduce creek's flood risk

By Willy Leferink,  
Chairman Carters Creek  
Catchment Group (CCCG)

You may not have heard of Carters Creek. It is the first creek crossing highway one heading south from the Ashburton Bridge and it is the focus for our new catchment group. For a long time the creek has been one of the poster boys for what can be wrong with surface water bodies. A group of local people got together last April to talk about how to fix the creek. It's a problem because it floods causing distress for homeowners. At the same time, the creek has poor water quality which is an issue because it ends up in Lake Hood, and is a risk to anyone interacting with the creek water.

People ask me what is a catchment group. It's a ground-up movement that encourages local people who live in the catchment to work together for a better local environment. There are lots of catchment groups around New Zealand but they are new to Mid Canterbury. Catchment groups are often, but not always, based around a waterway or common

environmental issues. In Mid Canterbury, our group is one of nine groups focused on issues as diverse as flooding, water quality, biodiversity and nutrient management. Some groups have a handful of members, others are larger. What they have in common is that it's always the people in the catchment who decide what to focus on.

If you can't visualise Carters Creek, you're not alone. Hidden away from public view, the creek originates several kilometres above Tinwald starting in natural springs on the southern side of the Ashburton River. Flowing through Tinwald, very few people can see it well hidden by garden fences and overgrown shrubs. After exiting Tinwald, Carters Creek meanders through farms and ends up in Lake Hood. While it normally dries up over summer, in the past three years with heavier rainfall, the creek has flowed year round. On 23 July last year several properties lost parts of gardens next to the creek and homes and garages were threatened by floodwaters. Some of these properties have seen several repeat floodings in recent years and in particular the 2017



flood was damaging.

Our group is the first urban-rural catchment group to form in the district. We are being supported by the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective which funds our facilitator and research efforts to date. Our goals are to create a healthier creek and reduce the flooding risk, and we're already working on a few things. We need help from Ashburton District Council and Environment Canterbury

and we've been talking to them about solutions, particularly for drainage. The group is also working closely with the Lake Hood Water Quality Taskforce.

Anyone living above Tinwald, within Tinwald itself, and downstream including the Lake Hood community can join us. The group has only met four times and we have more than two dozen people contributing ideas and information. We have an email database for those who

just want to be kept informed. This month we will host our first working bee to help flood affected property owners and sometime this year we plan to hold an open day event where people can learn about the creek.

If you'd like to be involved, please contact our facilitator Janine Holland on jr holland@xtra.co.nz or 027 4604940 or myself on 021 796037.

Let's make Carters Creek an asset instead of a problem.

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# Hurunui farmers focus on stream health monitoring

By Sharon Davis

The Hurunui District Landcare Group (HDLG), a network of around 300 farmers within Hurunui, is focusing on stream monitoring this summer.

They've identified just under a dozen streams in the hill country catchments of Hurunui and will be doing some initial tests to get baseline data.

HDLG catchment advisor Harry Millar said the tests would provide a "pulse check" on the catchments to get an idea of the overall health of about nine streams.

The group will be using three different tests - NIWA's Stream Health Monitoring Assessment Kit (SHMAK), a water quality test and an environmental DNA test.

For stream health monitoring they look at the algae in the riverbed and the invertebrates in the stream.

The types of algae and invertebrates present indicate how healthy the stream is. They're sensitive to things like sediment, temperature and organic nitrate, Millar said.



NIWA's Stream Health Monitoring Assessment Kit in action on the Pahau stream in Hurunui.

PHOTOS: SHARON DAVIS

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Suzanne Lambie returns water samples to the Pahau stream after doing a stream health assessment.

“The water quality test looks for soluble forms of nitrogen and phosphorous. Both can (but not necessarily) relate to farming and both drive plant growth and could explain why there is a lot of algae.”

The test also looks for E.coli and suspended sediment.

“The presence of sediment could be caused by animal use or

erosion,” Millar said.

Once the catchment assessments were complete the results would be shared with farmers within each catchment to share the highlights and discuss what was found.

It was an opportunity for farmers to get an idea of what was in their stream, he said.

Ecologists James and Suzanne Lambie were onsite in February to help with the assessments.

Suzanne said the streams being assessed were quite different from each other with indicators that ranged from not-so-good to excellent. However, the data was just a snapshot of one point in time.

“You can’t draw too much from

it,” she said.

Millar said the stream monitoring would give the HDLG a good understanding of what was going on in the catchment and would allow farmers to get feedback on what they could do to improve their streams

He said the need for stream monitoring was picked up from

concerns from local farmers.

The group hoped to create catchment sub-groups from farmers within each catchment for ongoing monitoring of stream health.

Suzanne said the HDLG had SHMAK tests that farmers could loan to test the streams more regularly.

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# Farmers urged to plan for more drought conditions

By Sharon Davis

New Zealand farmers face a summer of potential 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 South Island – while the west coast is likely to be wetter than usual.

Apart from less rain, the frequent westerly winds play a part in drying out the area. Weather systems pass over the region faster, while the dry winds reduce water levels, dry out the land and evaporate water surfaces faster.

Beef + Lamb NZ said areas of South Island were beginning to dry out, particularly Marlborough, Canterbury, Central Otago and parts of Southland – with local variations in the regions, depending on soil moisture levels.

Feed supply was still generally sufficient – but there could be a potential squeeze on processing capacity in the event of extreme

dry conditions over the next few weeks.

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said local crop farmers were “pretty happy” with the hot and dry conditions at the start of January, which was perfect for harvest. But streams and rivers were running low and water restrictions were in place in some areas, which was a concern.

Dry conditions could affect crops in the ground as well as the set up for winter crops.

He said the foothills area was starting to dry up with water restrictions in place for Mount Somers.

The Aclands’ farm had not been this dry for several years - “since before the 2020 floods”.

Acland said farmers will need to plan for the conditions - and may need to take a financial decision to sell short to ensure long-term survivability.

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.



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# Mackenzie Highland Show

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

The South Island's biggest one-day show is back on Easter Monday.

The Mackenzie A&P Show, in its 126th year, will be held on April 1 at the Mackenzie A&P Showgrounds in Fairlie.

President Hamish McKerchar says the event is a fantastic day out for town and country alike.

"It's a great way for farmers to get off the farm and support a great community event and also for people with no farming connections to come and learn about the agriculture industry while enjoying a vast array of entertainment."

This year's show brings back regular favourites such as the kids' agrisports, Highland dancing, wood chopping, and sheepdog trials.

The New Zealand Kennel Club will host a dog show, and the Jae Bedford School of Entertainment will once again hold a talent quest on The Barwood's stage.

This year, a new highlight will be a youth fencing competition for high school students.

The Mackenzie Young Farmers' Club and The Pleasant Point Young Farmers' Club will battle it out again in a



tug-of-war.

McKerchar said the event is an important one in the Fairlie community calendar and is a good boost for the local economy, with many visitors stopping in on their way home from Warbirds over Wanaka.

"The Mackenzie Highland Show is one of, if not the biggest day in the community.

"It provides a huge influx of people into the area.

"Fairlie is usually a thoroughfare, but on Easter Monday, it is a destination."

McKerchar's family has a long

history of involvement with the Mackenzie A&P Show, and McKerchar said he has enjoyed growing into the role.

"It's been good knowing how much support I have around me on the committee.

"Although I'm the face this year, we have a great committee where everyone knows their roles, gets on, and gets things done.

"Being fourth-generation president and being able to showcase the area to the wider region is something I'm really proud of.

## Temuka and Geraldine A&P Show



- **Show name:** Temuka and Geraldine A&P Show/ Kinsman Contracting Winchester Show
- **Show location:** State Highway 1 Winchester
- **Show date:** Saturday 2nd March 2024
- **Parking:** on the grounds
- **President:** Stephanie McCullough
- **Senior Vice president:** Peter McCullough
- **Opening Times:** 8am
- **Ticket sales :** \$15 per adult,

- school children free
- **Key Highlights:** Good old fashioned show with horses showing their stuff in the rings, FX Motorbike displays throughout the day, Free lego tent, children's entertainment and Sha-low playing all day, Jewelfract jewellery giveaway
- **Best place to follow for information:** Facebook Temuka and Geraldine A&P show or email the secretary on [temukageraldineap@gmail.com](mailto:temukageraldineap@gmail.com)



### Are you a Bull or a Bear?



While at the Mackenzie A&P Highland Show make sure you visit Michelle Parkin for a chat and some refreshments at the Forsyth Barr tent. Michelle can help you find out if you're a Bull or a Bear when you enter the sharemarket competition.

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# Something for everyone at the Methven A&P Show

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

The Methven A&P Show is set to be a cracker this year, with something for everyone, from utes to water buffalo, when gates open on March 16. Methven A&P president Trevor Monson

says the show has a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with events throughout the day. "There is something of interest for all ages. It's affordable for families, with a lot of free experiences for children, including pony rides, animal petting & face painting." A new art precinct will include works from local artists featuring Hannah Kidd, Jo

Gerard, Gina Ensor and Amelia Guild. The Methven Ute Muster, in its third year, will be taking place at the show and is set to be a highlight, A&P show vice president Ben Streeter says. "It just keeps getting bigger every year, and there's something for everyone. "There's farm and tradie utes and vintage ones. There's everything, and it draws a completely different crowd."

Entries for the ute muster can be made on the day and are \$30, which includes entry to the show.

Other show day highlights include wood chopping, sheep shearing, gumboot throwing, tug of war and the Scottish tradition of sheaf tossing.

"A sheaf was traditionally a bag of chaff from when they used to harvest the oats.

"It's a really old tradition where you throw this bag of chaff over a bar, which is like a rugby goalpost."

The bar is lifted higher and higher, with a prestigious cup being awarded for

the highest throw.

The hands-on animal shed has been extended to showcase a wool display, a sheep section and a vast array of animals, including eels, puppies, a poultry section, a bee hive display and an Italian water buffalo named Truffles.

Truffles' owner, Kayla John, says Truffles loves cuddles, scratches and bread, but can be a little shy with strangers.

"Truffles was born a few days before Christmas 2021, which is how we landed on Truffles for a name," John said.

"He was super tiny at birth and has been slow to grow, but what he lacks in height, he makes up for in girth."

A community bar with live entertainment will be open from 3 pm on the side of the show ring.

"It's a good atmosphere down there," Streeter said.

"Last year was the first year we moved the bar ringside, and it worked really well."



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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- **Show name:** Methven A&P Show (108th Show)
- **Show location:** Methven Showgrounds - Barkers Road
- **Show date:** March 16
- **Parking:** Free Parking, Visitors - Gate D Barkers Road
- **President:** Trevor Monson
- **Vice president:** Ben Streeter
- **Opening Times:** Gates open 8.30 to 5
- **Ticket sales (cost/at gate etc)** Adults \$20 Children free

- **Key Highlights:** Animal shed, Wine & Food, Art Precinct, Live Music, Show Jumping, Wood Chopping, Shearing, Highland Dancing, Ute Muster, Sheep Colouring, Amusements. There's free pony rides, balloon twisting & face painting for kids!
- **Best place to follow for information:** Methven A&P Instagram & Facebook and Methven Ute Muster Instagram & Facebook

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# FARMINGFASTFIVE

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

Today we talk to Mid Canterbury farmer and Mayfield A&P Show president, *BEN MORROW*.

**What did your journey into farming look like?**

I have grown up on the farm and used to have naps in my naps in the back of the tractor. My family have been here for 5 generations and my two boys are the sixth generation to grow up in Montalto. I have always wanted to be an arable farmer and have been drawn to machinery from a young age.

**Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.**

Arable/dairy support farm, stony silt loam in the foothills. We grow mainly barley, wheat, oats, grass seed, kale, and fodder beet. With some dabbling in other crops every now and again.

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

Consistency of yield. One way we have tackled this challenge is to put some irrigation on. Rising costs and interest rates – we try to keep a close eye on our little costs and try to do everything ourselves such as

spraying, cultivation, drilling, spreading and harvesting. Stone picking is a physical and mental challenge! We have developed some paddocks using a stone picker to a level to grow potatoes but a lot of rocks still need to be picked by hand each season before drilling.

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

It has been rewarding to do the development to put irrigation on. Designing a well laid out farm has been satisfying. Moving on to the family farm and being able to raise my family here. Being well supported by my parents and my wife.

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

Enjoy the good years and make the most of them. There will always be hard years but keep positive and I have found being part of the community really helps. Knowing that you are not on your own.



Ben Morrow.

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# Mayfield Show president follows in family's footsteps



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

Ben Morrow, this year's Mayfield A&P Show president, describes the event as "a small show that punches above its weight. It's family-friendly and has some unique attractions such as the pig racing, the tractor pull, and all the regular favourites as well, like arts and crafts, the pet tent, produce, food, and entertainment," Morrow says.

Morrow is following a family tradition as the third member of his family to be at the helm of the show,

which has been running for 98 years.

Morrow's father was Mayfield Show president in 1993, and his mother took on the role in 2007.

"My father, Mark, was the first to train the pigs for pig racing, and this year my brothers-in-law have that job.

"My mother, Nicky, has always been a great supporter of the show, putting in entries every year. "This year, she is patron of the show."

Morrow said the biggest challenge is fine-tuning the show and building on the lessons learned from the previous event.

"We are trying to keep it cash-

positive so we can invest back into the A&P grounds and ensure this great event can keep running."

Morrow said the show was an important way to showcase the district and bring the community together, and he encourages people to come along on March 9 and enjoy all the event it has to offer.

"Make time to be involved with your community, have heaps of fun catching up and enjoy the good rural hospitality. We have a great committee who put in so much work to make it an awesome day. There is something for all ages to enjoy."

## Mayfield Agricultural and Pastoral Show

• **Show location:** Mayfield A&P Showgrounds, 2020 Arundel Rakaia Gorge Road.

• **Show date:** 9th March 2024

• **Parking:** Off Arundel Gorge Road, (Lions will assist).

• **President:** Ben Morrow  
 • **Vice president:** Tim Rowe

• **Opening Times:** 9 am – 4 pm

• **Ticket sales (cost/ at gate etc) :** \$15 adults,

school children free. Cash sales at gate or buy tickets online <https://showday.online/show/mayfield>

• **Key Highlights:** Tractor pull, pig racing, pet tent, produce and stock, arts and crafts, horse riding, food, kids rides and entertainment and much more.

• **Best place to follow for information:** Follow us on facebook: Mayfield Show and <https://showday.online/show/mayfield>



PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

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Farmers can halve the time spent spraying pasture and establishing crops with an innovative new sprayer and boom system designed by Kiwis for New Zealand conditions.

Building on 35 years' experience in the industry, BA Pumps and Sprayers have launched a cutting-edge spraying system with a fully-hydraulic folding boom.

The new system is ready to hit the paddocks and will be on display at local dealers and field days over the next few weeks.

BA Pumps and Sprayers general manager Mark Harris said the game-changing LM Linkage Sprayer and M-fold Boom was designed to offer unparalleled efficiency, safety and productivity for Kiwi farmers - saving up to 50% on spraying time compared to the 600-litre manual folding boom sprayers in operation on a lot of pastoral farms in NZ.

"It's a world-first design,

uniquely crafted in New Zealand for New Zealand local conditions, prioritising safety, efficiency, and durability."

The design is unique so BA Pumps and Sprayers has applied for a patent and design registration for several features of the product.

"It's not often you can launch a sprayer that provides a step change in performance and value. We believe this innovative solution will set a new benchmark for pasture and crop spraying for farmers - providing them with a tool to get the job done quicker, easier and safely," Harris said.

The LM sprayer comes with a unique t-shaped tank (available in 900l and 1150l capacities) to reduce mud and debris collection on working surfaces of the sprayer and bias the weight forward for better stability on the tractor.

The waist-height induction hopper makes it easy and

efficient to load chemicals, while the built-in flush tank and hand wash tank ensure the pump and spray lines are easy to clean and maintain.

In-cab electronic controls provide flexibility with on/off and pressure adjustment on the move and the Bertolini 75-litre pump can handle liquid fertilisers, increasing the versatility of the sprayer.

The LM Series also has the option for auto rate, and GPS upgrades for precision applications.

The new M-Boom is available in 12m and 10m and can cover up to 18m with the extra factory-fitted fence-line kit.

The boom has a full wing lift, and two hydraulic remotes is all that is required to fold or open the boom from the tractor seat - perfect for farms with rolling country.

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The game-changing LM Linkage Sprayer and M-fold Boom has a full wing lift operated by just two tractor remotes to raise, lower, open or close the boom from the tractor seat.

past obstacles and the smooth outer shape reduces fence snags reducing the chances of damage

to the sprayer from fences when they inevitably come together from time to time.

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# Cheviot Show is back after a two-year break

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

The Mt Beautiful Cheviot A&P Show will be held on March 9 this year, after being cancelled in 2022 and 2023 due to COVID restrictions and inclement weather.

Show co-president Emma Mulcock says the Cheviot A&P Association has been looking forward to welcoming the event back to the showgrounds.

"The A&P Show brings together the exhibits and talents of the Cheviot community and also gives a chance for the community to catch up with each other in these days of increasingly busy lives," Mulcock says.

This year's theme for the show is "Grow Cheviot", which aims to showcase the experiences, talent and produce that the Cheviot area offers.



Cheviot A&P Show presidents Emma and Chris Mulcock.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Trade exhibitors will be back this year with everything from helicopters to tractors. Sheep shearing, dog trails and steer riding will be show-day highlights.

There will be a fashion in

the field contest, and a woolly wearable art competition that must include wool, be mainly from recycled materials and Kiwiana themed.

"The sheep shearing this year should attract lots of

competition with good prize money on offer.

"Then there are all the usual shed displays, including cooking, flowers, fruit and vegetables, photography, imaginative creations, and the local schools' and pre-schools' creative displays.

"People should come for a fun-filled family day out. There's something for everyone."

There will be local entertainment throughout the show, with the band Blue Groove playing at the end-of-day community barbecue.

Mulcock said she has enjoyed working with different community members to make the show a success.

"A&P Shows keep the spirit of the community alive.

"They are a chance for communities to come together and celebrate the district's diversity and all they have to offer visitors."

## Amuri A&P Show for the whole family

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

Amuri A&P Show president Richie Ormand says there is something for everyone at what will be the event's 108th year on March 2.

"We have many wonderful permanent events – horse and pony events all day, steer riding, shearing, a terrier race, sheep counting, the grand parade led by a pipe band, a baby look-a-like competition and sideshows.

"The North Canterbury Axeman's Club organises one of the biggest events in New Zealand, with 60 competitors this year on both Saturday and Sunday."

Morgan Duncan, ANZCO 2023 Butcher of the Year, will give a demonstration, and Sonia Duncan will perform trick riding in the ring.

Kids are well catered to on the day. Craig Smith, author of the much-loved children's book *Wonky Donkey*, will present a morning and afternoon show. There will be a children's decorated bike competition and a chance to enter a pet lamb or dog for judging.

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