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APRIL 2024

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WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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Celebrating success

We are approaching the end of A&P Show season and heading into awards season, with regional competitions for some of New Zealand's most prestigious titles underway now.

The FMG Young Farmer of the Year, the Ballance Farm Environment Awards, and the Dairy Industry Awards have begun, with national finals on the horizon. The Dairy Woman of the Year will be announced at the Dairy Women's Network conference in May, and the Arable Awards will be held in August in Christchurch.

These awards are important because they showcase the good work our sector is doing in sustainable agriculture and inspire others to raise the bar.

When I interview award winners or even finalists, they tell me how rewarding the experience is, how much they have learned through the judging process, and how much they have benefited from the connections they have made.

There is the added benefit that some of these stories may filter out beyond the farm gates into mainstream media, where the urban demographic can better understand the inroads farmers are making as guardians of the land.

So why don't more farmers throw their hat in the ring for these awards?

Some farmers are reluctant to put their heads up with the negativity that seems to have attached itself to agriculture; others fear that good old tall poppy syndrome will rear its head, and they will open themselves up to criticism from their peers.

In reality, we need to stick our heads up now to remind ourselves and the urban demographic just how good New Zealand farmers are at what they do.

Maybe these awards feel too daunting, in which case that's where A&P Shows come into play.

A&P Shows are a great mini-showcase of agriculture, and we should never underestimate their power for reaching the urban demographic.

The wool and sheep categories, hoof-to-hotplate, and wheat competitions are a more low-key but still valuable ways to tell our story and highlight what we, as farmers, do.

We need to celebrate our success on as many levels as we can so we can remind ourselves we have so much to be proud of in primary industry and to keep raising the bar for the future of New Zealand agriculture.



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Return of cat hunting at North Canterbury event

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

The North Canterbury Hunt Competition (NCHC) is back this Matariki weekend on June 28-30 in Rotherham, with the feral cat category firmly in place.

Last year's event was the biggest hunting competition in New Zealand, with a total of 1518 entries, which included 409 in the junior section.

243 cats were culled as part of the junior section of last year's event.

The competition sparked backlash last year from animal welfare groups, with activists from Christchurch Animal Save protesting at the event's weigh-in, allegedly calling children who had entries in the feral cat category 'murderers'.

NCHC organiser Mat Bailey says everyone has their perspective, and he welcomes the protesters.

"I hope they come because that's what brings the crowds."

"It made my day, with everyone here, especially the old timers, with protesters in the Amuri Showgrounds; they just thought it was hilarious."

"Everyone loved it, so bring it on."

Christchurch Animal Save organiser Sarah Jackson said the group plans to protest at the event again this year if they can get enough volunteers.

"We would like to see non-lethal methods taken when dealing with our introduced species because they are victims of colonisation," Jackson said.

"It's not their fault they are here, but they are here now."

Jackson said that the threat feral cats impose on native wildlife doesn't justify hunting them and that non-lethal methods like neutering and relocating would be a more humane option.

"To prioritise animals that were here previously, and that we hold more value to, is not really fair."

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) scientific officer Dr Christine Sumner says that the SPCA acknowledges that feral cats are considered a pest under New Zealand law but is opposed to methods (of killing) that don't result in a humane death.

"SPCA advocates that feral cat management is done by people who have experience and are



confident in their abilities to humanely manage cats, engage with the local community about management activities, and use the most humane methods of lethal control where this is deemed necessary," Sumner said.

"Humane methods are those that lead to the quickest death, with the least amount of suffering."

Sumner expressed concern that hunters may be unable to differentiate between domestic



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

and feral cats.

"SPCA is concerned not everyone can tell the difference between a trapped feral, stray or a frightened companion cat based on appearance and behaviour."

"Managing feral cats as part of a competition may lead to less humane treatment of feral, stray and companion cats."

This year, the feral cat section will be open to all ages, with a prize for the biggest feral cat.

The winner will receive a

taxidermy trophy of a black feral cat.

Other prizes up for grabs at the event include a 2010 Toyota Hilux as spot prize for an open hunter and a Honda motorbike for a junior hunter.

The 2023 NCHC event weighed in a total of 379 animals in the open section: 142 deer, 231 pigs and six chamois, and event organisers hope the event will continue to grow.

Last year's event saw Hunter for Hope process 50 deer into mince and back steaks from the competition, which was donated to the Hope Community Trust and distributed to local food banks, providing around 4500 meals for those in need.

Bailey said the competition is looking to partner with Hunters for Hope again at this year's event to provide more venison for food banks.

Proceeds from the hunt will go back into the Rotherham community, supporting the school and local pool.

The school will host a barbecue on the day, and there will be a coffee cart, food truck and a lolly scramble to keep children entertained.

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SNA requirement on hold

By Sharon Davis

Farmers across New Zealand will be pleased that the pause button has been pushed on the requirement to identify Significant Natural Areas (SNAs).

The new coalition government has suspended the requirement for councils to identify and map SNAs for three years while it replaces the Resource Management Act.

Associate environment minister and Act MP Andrew Hoggard

made the announcement at the Central Districts Field Days in Feilding on Thursday.

He said the suspension was an interim measure to ensure councils and communities did not waste resources and efforts on requirements that were likely to change.

"We're sending a clear message that it would be unwise to bother," he said.

Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) has welcomed the decision.

B+LNZ chair Kate Acland said this announcement would be applauded by sheep and beef farmers.

"Our farmers are doing it tough at the moment."

Acland said farmer confidence had dropped over concerns about the expense and feasibility of the previous government's environmental reform agenda.

B+LNZ had repeatedly told the Labour government the criteria for SNAs was too broad and that

more time was needed to test the effects of this and to get the rules right, she said.

"Any move to address some of the particularly flawed rules is very welcome."

She said the announcement provided some breathing space while the government looks at SNAs.

"We look forward to being involved in that review."

Acland said farmers were "hugely" committed to looking after their land and

protecting and enhancing native biodiversity.

"There's 2.8 million hectares of native vegetation on New Zealand's sheep and beef farms and that's something we're incredibly proud of."

"The current criteria for an SNA are far too broad and will capture huge swathes of sheep and beef farmland, tying up farmers in red tape and penalising those who've done the most to look after the native biodiversity on their land."

Financial relief as dry bites top of South Island

By Sharon Davis

Farmers doing it tough in the top of South Island will be able to access financial support as prolonged dry conditions bite.

Agriculture Minister Todd McClay classified the near-record dry spell in Marlborough, Tasman and Nelson districts as a "medium-scale adverse event" on March 14.

The declaration of a drought will allow affected farmers to access tax relief and other support through Inland Revenue.

The government has also given the local Rural Support Trust \$20,000 to help farmers in the

Marlborough, Tasman and Nelson districts.

"Parts of Marlborough, Tasman, and Nelson districts are in the grip of an intense dry spell. I know this has made day-to-day conditions on the ground extremely tough for farmers and growers," McClay said.

Marlborough and parts of Tasman, as well as parts of Northland and Wairarapa, are currently listed as "very dry" in the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research meteorological drought index.

The declaration comes as some farmers at the top of the South Island were using winter feed

supplies to keep stock fed.

Others are selling stock to reduce numbers on dry farms under the pressure of feed costs and a drop in lamb and mutton prices.

Areas in Marlborough had the driest six-month period going back to 1930.

The Ministry for Primary Industries said conditions in the top of South Island were extremely dry and likely to worsen in the coming months.

Top of the South Rural Support Trust chairperson Richard Kempthorne said farmers were dealing with dwindling grass growth and extra work feeding

animals.

"Some streams that haven't dried up before, have now dried up. They are experiencing very dry conditions."

The situation was particularly challenging for young farmers with more debt, he said.

The dry El Niño patterns are also affecting Canterbury and Otago farmers, with stock water running low in South Canterbury and dairy farmers cutting back on milking.

Farmers in need of support are encouraged to contact their local Rural Support Trust.

Roughly a week later the government extended the support to drought-affected

farmers in Canterbury and Otago and provided \$70,000 to Rural Support Trusts in North, Mid, and South Canterbury and Otago to facilitate community and one-on-one support.

Federated Farmers North Otago president Myfanwy Alexander welcomed the news.

"There are inland parts of Otago and South Canterbury that have had barely 15mm of rain since January 1st, and that's been spread out in dribs and drabs of a few millimetres."

"Basically, if you're out past Duntroon and you don't have irrigation touching the ground, your grass is dead," Alexander said.

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Monitoring saves seedlings

Front-footing the autumn slug peak with Ironmax Pro®

At this time of the year, slugs have the potential to cause significant damage to vulnerable seedlings. And, in severe cases, wipe-out entire crops.

Expert, Tom McDonald from UPL NZ Ltd. warns that just because conditions are dry, it doesn't mean the slugs aren't there, or that populations aren't building up. Tom says, as with any pest, or diseases, knowing what you are dealing with is critical for effective control.

UPL recently released their own environmentally friendly hessian sack specifically for slug monitoring. Tom says it's recognition not just of the importance of vigilance but, on a very practical level, that not everyone now has their own supply of old sacks in the back of a grain shed. "This is a very effective option and it's environmentally friendly. When you're finished with it, you can re-purpose it for storing spuds, or dry feed."

Tom recommends putting the dampened sack on the ground in the evening and checking it in the morning. "Even one slug could mean there's a problem you need to get on top of."

Travelling up to 13 metres in one night, slugs are voracious feeders and can consume more than 50% of their own body weight. When slugs are not

controlled, damage to plants can happen surprisingly quickly. "Infestations can appear seemingly out of nowhere, as the pests are capable of producing 300 eggs in their short, 13-month lifespan."

"Slugs 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 mostly what occurs, but self-fertilisation is not unknown."

To control slugs, Tom recommends Ironmax Pro. "It's made by the world's leaders in molluscicides, De Sangosse. They also make Metarex® Inov slug bait, which people have been using for yonks." He says BioGro certified Ironmax Pro has the same strengths as Metarex Inov but is gentler on people and the planet.

"It also doesn't have that really strong smell!"

That's a benefit, which has been a double-edged sword, Tom says, when convincing people Ironmax Pro works well.

"People have this perception with crop protection products that if they don't smell awful, they might not do the job."

However, he says with the backing of early adopters, Ironmax Pro is turning that attitude around. "We've got

some major contractors and leading farmers who are onboard and are seeing the benefits – not just in delivering effective slug control but also the benefits to the environment and people."

"It's just better for everybody, bar the slugs!"

"For the farm resellers, who stock the product, they've been telling us Ironmax Pro has been like a breath of fresh air. And for contractors and farmers there's no longer that nagging doubt about sitting with the product in an enclosed tractor cab or ute."

Tom says Ironmax Pro also provides a back-stop with stock management. "Even on the best properties, there may be the occasional issue with stock breaking out. Using Ironmax Pro means that a faulty electric fence, or a gate accidentally left open isn't going to be that big of a deal."

"The same goes for reduced risk to farm dogs and companion animals, and your beneficials – including earthworms, and the slug predator carabid beetle – so you still get those working for you."

Tom says Ironmax Pro's BioGro certification isn't just a bit of green window-dressing. "De Sangosse have really committed to the product covering everything from the



factory which uses 33% green electricity, right down to the packaging, which is a double-lined paper bag."

He's also keen to scotch a story he says some farmers have heard that juvenile slugs won't feed on the bait. "That just isn't the case. Slugs have rasp-like mouthparts (technically – a radula). That is how they feed. They will, and do, happily eat this bait. The size and shape of the bait doesn't matter. It's taste, (to the slugs), that will 100% win the day."

And he's got reason to be confident on that score.

Ironmax Pro's breakthrough Colzactive® technology gives it exceptional palatability, which Tom says puts it head and shoulders above conventional baits. "Extensive trials showed that slugs not only preferred Ironmax Pro to other baits – they preferred it to feeding on the seedlings themselves."

Created specifically by the De Sangosse research and development team, Colzactive is made up of specially selected oil seed rape extracts. The De Sangosse R&D team evaluated 20 different plant species and identified 50 potential molecules based on their attractiveness to slugs.

"They de-selected to just two molecules from oil seed rape for their outstandingly palatable characteristics."

Ironmax Pro contains the optimized active ingredient 24.2 g/kg ferric phosphate anhydrous, referred to as IPMax. Iron phosphate is a natural component of soil. It works as a stomach poison on slugs and snails and is fatal once ingested. A vital organ (the digestive gland) becomes overloaded with iron which impairs the digestion process and ultimately the ability to process food. Feeding stops almost immediately.



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Thirty years flying low

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Top-dressing pilots are known for their prowess in the air, and Ravensdown Aerowork pilot David Evans, with thirty years of experience in the cockpit, is one of New Zealand's best.

With low-altitude flying and the need to be able to land planes in some dubious places, top dressing remains one of the most challenging jobs in the agriculture industry, but Evans' experience means he is adept at handling risky situations.

"The element of risk is always there, but we try our best to mitigate risk and come home," Evans says.

"People look for thrills in life, but we don't need to do that because we are flying low level and we are fast all the time.

"It's a bit like being a racing car driver."

Evans is a second generation top-dressing pilot. His late father, Bruce, worked for top-dressing pioneer Peter Rowley, who started his business in the 1950s using a Tiger Moth.

Evans hadn't considered a career in the agricultural aviation industry until fate intervened shortly after he finished high school when his father's loader driver broke his arm.

"It was around 1990, and I



With thirty years as a top-dressing pilot, David Evans knows how to mitigate the risks in one of agriculture's most challenging jobs. PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

ended up driving the loader for him, and that's where it all began."

Evans began his pilot training through the Canterbury Aero Club, paying his tuition fees with funds from his work as a loader

driver.

"It all happened when I was on the truck and earning enough money to do it.

"I did all my exams and study sitting in the loader."

Once Evans gained his licence,

he began flying the top-dressing plane to and from home.

"I gained a lot of experience that way.

"I landed and took off from most of the airstrips we were going to work off, so it was a good

grounding for top-dressing."

In 1994, Rowley sold the business to Evans' parents, and Evans' father decided it was time for his son to move on from loader driving.

"I drove the truck to a job in the gorge one day and thought it was a bit odd that my Dad turned up with his brother Wyllie, and Dad chucked Wyllie in the loader and said you might as well jump in the plane and do a couple of loads."

Evans describes his father as a good flight instructor.

"My Dad taught me how to top dress.

"He had obviously done a lot of flying with me and could see my capabilities."

Evans went on to gain his commercial licence, a requirement for top dressing pilots, and his agricultural rating.

"Any revenue-earning job requires a commercial licence, and we have to do an agricultural rating, which is quite specialised in that it's low level. Being low and fast means there are a lot of hazards and wires that you have to deal with.

"You've got birds and wildlife screaming at you."

On top of the hazards, Evans said it's important to spread the fertiliser accurately and at the correct rate so farmers get the maximum benefit from their investment.

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David Evans in action during the Port Hills emergency in February.

PHOTO: HAMISH KIRK



Topdressing planes fight fires over the Port Hills.

PHOTO: TIM WARD

“When I started, there wasn’t GPS, and now there is, so that helps a lot.”

After Evans’ father passed away, Evans took a brief break from top dressing before taking up the job for Aerowork, a division of Ravensdown, in 2019.

“Ravensdown has spent a lot of money developing its spreaders and variable rate application, and that progresses as time goes on.”

Evans flies a Cresco 750 horsepower plane, which was built in 1998 in Hamilton by Pacific Aerospace Corporation. The plane is well suited to top dressing and New Zealand

conditions, Evans said.

“It’s really powerful and carries two tonnes.

“It’s suited to flying in New Zealand because of its layout, undercarriage, and ease of flying, whereas many planes are coming in that are much heavier and harder to handle in windy conditions.”

With top-dressing planes becoming hard to get and with a high price tag, the focus remains on maintaining Ravensdown’s fleet of seven planes, three of which reside in the South Island.

“They rebuild the planes every four years, and they come out as

good as new.”

The plane and Evans’ flying skills took centre stage recently when he was called up to help fight the Port Hills fires near Christchurch.

Over two days, Evans and one other fixed-wing pilot dropped fire retardant over the flames, work which Evans said the Cresco is well suited for.

“Fixed wing is quite punchy, we can drop two tonne of water and get rid of it in seconds, so it has quite a good effect.”

“We have always had the ability to fight fires, but nowadays they bring in helicopters, whereas

before aeroplanes did it all.”

Evans said it’s disappointing that helicopters are chosen over fixed-wing machines for fire-fighting when top-dressing pilots are skilled at flying in difficult conditions with quick turnarounds.

“As our daily job, we can be working multiple planes together, and we minimise our risk so we aren’t running into each other.

Evans said he enjoyed the challenge of fighting the fires and the camaraderie between volunteer firefighters and the pilots.

“It was quite good being so

visible with the fires because normally we are out the back, and no one sees what we do.

“It’s good to come out of it thinking we’ve done some good.”

Evans says he enjoys challenge and variation within top-dressing.

“We are very lucky; our job changes every day.

“You are at a new block, working for a new farmer, and all the hazards go with it so it keeps you engaged.

“I enjoy seeing the results of what we do, and farmers are generally quite appreciative because, obviously, we are quite important to their livelihood.”




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Farmer confidence improving

Concerns about high interest rates, poor commodity prices and “excessive red tape” are weighing heavily on farmers, but rural confidence has risen from last year’s record lows, Federated Farmers says.

Its latest Farm Confidence Survey shows there’s been a positive shift in the rural mood since 2023, when confidence reached its lowest point in the survey’s 15-year history.

“It’s good to see the first improvement in farmer confidence for quite some time now,” national president Wayne Langford said.

“I want to be clear that it’s only a slight improvement and it’s coming off a very

low base. I wouldn’t say farmers are feeling more confident yet - they’re just feeling less unconfident.

“Confidence is no longer going backwards, but it’s still in the gutter.”

Langford said farmers are struggling with high inflation, high interest rates and lower commodity prices, and the impact of those on their profitability.

“Most farmers are still feeling that general economic conditions are bad, and most are still making a loss.

“Where we are seeing a shift is in the number of farmers who expect things will

improve in the next 12 months. So, times are tough, but there’s a sense of cautious optimism.”

Compared to last July, the January 2024 survey shows more farmers expect their production and spending to increase, and fewer farmers expect their debt to increase, in the 12 months ahead.

Langford said there were a number of drivers behind the confidence recovery.

“Inflation is slowing, interest rates are high but have hopefully peaked, and commodity prices - at least for dairy - seem to have stabilised.

“We’ve also seen a change of government in the last six months, with a real commitment to roll back some of the more impractical and expensive regulation that’s undermined farmer confidence.”

He was optimistic this was the start of a genuine, steady increase in confidence.

“I think we will see confidence continue to lift in the year ahead, helped by an easing of unnecessary regulatory pressure on farmers.

“Federated Farmers is working hard with the new government to reduce that burden, like fixing unworkable freshwater rules.

“It’s all about cutting red tape, making

compliance on-farm easier, and getting our primary sector humming again.”

The survey identified farmers’ biggest concerns right now as: debt, interest and banks; farmgate and commodity prices; regulation and compliance costs; and climate change policy and the ETS.

Langford wasn’t surprised to see interest rates came out as the top concern.

“I’ve spoken to a lot of farmers who are getting work off-farm just to make ends meet. It’s exactly why Federated Farmers have been calling for an independent inquiry into rural banking.

“Farmers need to know why interest rates for rural lending have gone up so much more than for residential. That margin between rural and residential has shifted significantly and it’s left farmers feeling confused and frustrated.

“An inquiry would provide that transparency and give farmers some confidence that they’re at least getting a fair deal from their bank.”

He encouraged any farmers who may be struggling to reach out for support.

“Even though we’re talking about a slight confidence lift, it’s still extremely tough for farmers out there, so please reach out to the likes of Federated Farmers and Rural Support Trust if you need help.”



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Wayne Langford

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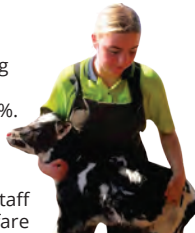
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Being the cereal bowl of New Zealand makes Mid Canterbury especially prone to rats and mice at this time of the year.

Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Ltd Regional Manager Upper North Island, is an expert on rodent control. He's an advocate of Generation Soft Bait, which, he says, contrary to what the name suggests, is definitely not a soft option. "It's just a lot more tempting – but only to rodents, not to non-target animals. The original Generation Block Bait absolutely has its place, and some long-time users, but Generation Soft Bait has quantifiable advantages.

"From a rat's perspective, the difference between a wax-encased block and soft bait, is like the difference between chewing on a candle or crayon and them eating peanut butter. Generation Soft Bait is totally irresistible to them."

And, he's prepared to put his reputation, and own pets, on the line in recommending it.

"I use Generation Soft Bait on my own property. I also have dogs and cats, aviaries and chickens. There have been absolutely no safety issues using Generation Soft Bait. There are no other products on the market like it."

The secret to the bait's success, Pieter says, is that it was tested on wild populations – not just on lab rats. "That's unique.

"It also took into consideration wild rat behaviour including the feeding 'pecking order'. Rats are neophobic – they mistrust anything new. That's why the attractiveness is vital."

"And because the effects of Generation Soft Bait are delayed a bit, once the dominant rats have fed, other rats gain in confidence and follow their lead."

He explains rats actively preferred Generation Soft Bait to other food sources in trials and it far outperformed any other baits.

He says the specially developed vegetable oil and crushed grain-based formulation gets rats' attention faster, with the soft bait's paper ensuring the tempting aroma disperses more widely. Pieter says it's also very easy to deploy by skewering the plasticine-like bait on the metal rod, or wire, within the Generation bait station. "It's quick, clean, and convenient."

The smallest non-dispersible bait on the market, Generation Soft Bait kills effectively and in a single feed. 2-3 g kills a rat



and 0.3-0.4 g a mouse. To put that into perspective, a rat's average daily dietary intake is 20 g/day while for a mouse it's about 3 g/day.

Generation Soft Bait also won't leak or melt and has very good moisture and heat tolerance which makes it practical in a wide range of farm, lifestyle, and residential applications. It also contains Bitrex, a bittering agent, that reduces the risk of consumption by non-target animals, which can be a concern using conventional rat baits for anyone with pets or farm dogs.

Generation Soft Bait is the most advanced anti-coagulant on the market, using difethialone 25 ppm as its active, which rodents can't detect. There is no known

genetic resistance among rodent populations.

Pieter says rodents probably cause much more damage than we're aware of, including fires in vehicles and buildings due to electrical wires being chewed through. That's on top of the more obvious damage to buildings, loss and contamination of feedstuffs, and posing a threat to native birds and other fauna.

Among the most serious mammalian pests known to man, the rodents are destructive, dirty, and disease-carrying. A single rat can produce 50 droppings and 50 mL of urine daily.

New Zealand has four species of introduced rodents – the Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), the ship rat (*Rattus rattus*), the

Polynesian rat (kiore), and the house mouse. The ship rat is the most common of the rats and also the smaller of the three rats.

The "native" kiore is larger but usually only found in the bush. The other rodents, Pieter says, most people will unfortunately have had some experience of, even if it's just when the cat brings one inside.

He says evidence of even one mouse or rat probably means there's a more significant problem and he recommends using bait proactively as the best strategy. "It's going to save you money down the track."

His advice is based on solid evidence. Rats are tough and can breed very quickly.

Rats are physically strong and very resilient and have been known to swim for up to two days in open water. They can jump a metre high, and 1.2 m horizontally.

Rats reach sexual maturity at 8 to 12 weeks and mate year-round, multiplying to almost plague-like proportions in a very short time. Population explosions are often linked to "mast years" for native trees and flowers seed production – around every 2-5 years. "Rats and mice just gorge on the seeds and numbers soar," Pieter says.

Take down those dirty rats and mice

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Generation Soft Bait is a next generation anti-coagulant in an irresistible formulation that only takes one single feed. Destruction, damage, and disease stop right there.



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Farmers dealt 'a rotten hand'

My name is Amy. My husband Hamish and I farm sheep and beef near Clinton in South Otago. We use regenerative farming methods following the advice of Dr Christine Jones. We spent months researching the options before taking the decision. Dr Jones is a leader in regenerative farming. Her methods build carbon into the soil, use lower inputs, improve stock health, and are better for us and the environment.

Our motto is 'optimising not maximising production' and despite some pretty tough challenges and hard work, we are really happy with the decision we took and the outcomes. It is a matter of doing the homework, studying the options and figuring what is best for us and our farm.

Now we are researching a different problem. We face being taxed for our ruminant methane emissions. Hamish and I have studied the issue very thoroughly and the more we dug into it, the more deeply disturbed we became.

Finding out simple, straightforward answers to questions like how much warming our farm is causing, or how much methane all farms in New Zealand are emitting, proved difficult, even impossible. A farming friend has had his farm assessed on three separate occasions for the amount of methane (so-called CO₂

equivalents) emitted and got three very different results. Are we going to be taxed for something that we have virtually no reliable data on?

Professor Dave Frame who advises the government and farming industries, and has been an IPCC participant, admits that New Zealand's total emissions from all sheep, beef, dairy and deer ruminant methane over the past 100 years have caused some nonsensical fraction like one, one-thousandth of a degree centigrade change. In other words, an immeasurable, utterly insignificant amount per year.

It seems to tally with what Dr William van Wijngaarden told Irish farmers recently, stating that all the world's ruminant methane over the next century would only cause 0.17th of a thousandth of a degree C change. Remember New Zealand only has 1% of the world's ruminants. For this we are proposing slashing our sheep and beef industry by 20% - even more if the carbon price goes higher as demanded by green groups. Few people know our ruminant emissions in New Zealand are falling and have done since 2005.

You might be thinking that everyone has to play their part - the sacrifice needs to fall on every sector in the battle against global warming. If that is the case, we should compare 'apples with apples.' Our ruminant methane



Hamish and Amy Bielski.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

and your car emissions are both greenhouse gases - but they differ significantly. Our emissions can only occur by using lots of CO₂ - greenhouse gas - to create them.

Compared to you, we have a 'net' position. Here is what our research showed.

According to a paper published called Phase 3 Multivariate Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Sheep and Beef Farms - April 2020 it takes up to 7 tonnes of CO₂ to grow a hectare of grass on our farm. It's called photosynthesis (if you can't remember your college science.) Plants use CO₂, sunlight, water and mineral salts.

We turn those 7 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare into enough feed for

10 ewes. Those 10 ewes each emit about 20 - 22 grams of methane a day which means they produce in total 80 kgs of methane per year. It is accepted that methane is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂ - generally regarded as 28 times stronger. If we multiply our ewe's 80 kgs of methane by 28 we get 2,250 kgs of CO₂ equivalent.

We are, therefore, using over three times more CO₂ than we emit. A car owner cannot say that. Or a coal fired boiler. Or a private jet going to a climate conference. Farmers are not quite the villains we are made out to be.

Have we miscalculated? No, but we do lose some CO₂ from our pasture as it respire and then dies back. We do sequester some deep into the soil, so that's a plus. Some carbon goes out from the farm in meat and wool. Reality is we are being dealt a rotten hand by both the people who are supposed to represent us and our scientists, who are ostensibly seeking our best interests. Too many are caught up in baseless hype and chasing funding for long-term projects. It is deeply disturbing and made Hamish and I sick to the pit of our stomach as we completed our research.

Now we have found the earth's outgoing re-radiated energy can only interact with each greenhouse gas in certain, defined bands/frequencies. Methane can only operate in two

narrow, weak bands where water vapour swamps it. Over New Zealand each one of our methane molecules competes with up to 8,000 water vapour molecules. We are not scientists but those who are qualified tell us to stop fretting about methane. In real life - not models - dominating water vapour renders methane ineffective.

We are told that the big overseas supermarkets are making demands of our exporters that require us to take action on methane. We know supermarkets. We tried marketing our own regen produce directly to them. They are super-bullies and will use any excuse to beat down the price. New Zealand has the lowest carbon footprint of any food producer in the world. Any alternative country's food they buy would be defrauding their customers.

We need a government that stands up for us as food producers. We feed 40 million people. Article 2 (b) of the Paris Agreement that we signed, said, clearly, that no government should take steps that "threaten food production". Why do we rush to meet some international obligations and ignore others?

We are unique in that we use more greenhouse gas than we emit and we urgently need a government to go into to bat for us in international forums.

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Able women should step up

By Mandy Bell
Deer IndustryNZ Chairperson

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

It's important that women - irrespective of any sector they're involved in - feel empowered and encouraged to lead from the front. Having diversity of thought in an organisation or around the board table is essential for any organisation. Women holding leadership positions mean there's that added layer of depth to discussions, different perspectives, and more opportunities for collaboration across the board.

Having said that, male or female, if you believe you are capable of adding value to an organisation, you should step forward and do it.

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

One common obstacle for anyone can be finding a balance between having the flexibility to manage both their leadership role as well as being there for their families and showing up in their personal lives.

With agricultural roles specifically, women often wear

several hats – working on the farm, in management, and in industry roles along with leadership. Travelling to and from the properties/place of work also adds significant time to the week.

In the past, women in the sector have had to break through that glass ceiling to get a seat at the table. Now, we're seeing more women in leadership roles across different industry bodies. Research has shown that collaboration is key to tackling opportunities and challenges and that women have strengths in these areas.

3. What advice do you have for women who want to rise through the ranks, and advance their career in agriculture?

- Having a real thirst for learning and knowledge that continues throughout your career is crucial.
- Being comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- Connecting and networking with people is important. Be proactive in approaching people for advice. Surround yourself with good people who complement your skills, support your strengths, and push you beyond your comfort zone.
- Do what you love with people that you enjoy being with.



Mandy Bell – women should lead from the front.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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FARMINGFASTFIVE

Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them.

Today we talk to Rotherham farmer and North Canterbury Hunt Competition organiser *MAT BAILEY*.

What did your journey into farming look like?

I grew up in Wairoa on the east coast of the North Island as a town boy.

I left high school and went farming for the Baynes family up towards Lake Waikaremoana, Colin and Marg where a great inspiration, they set me up with fundamentals of hard work and honesty - shearing all their own sheep, fencing, scrub cutting and the like. It was good hard yacka. I moved south completed a Diploma in Farm management at Lincoln University. I then worked at Mt Montrose for Dave and Jo Mckenzie, then to Cranford Downs for Ben and Renee Dampier-Crossley where I've been managing for the past ten years.

Tell us a little bit about your farming operation?

Cranford Downs, situated in Rotherham, is roughly 1000ha, with 500ha of irrigation under pivots and 500ha of downs, with 2500 ewes and 250 angus cows as well as 600 dairy heifers, and grows a variety of dairy winter crops.

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

We are very fortunate to have

this amount of irrigation in dry north Canterbury, but it comes at a huge cost, we have slowly progressed away from sheep and beef finishing and now focus on dairy support and growing feed to keep up with the rising costs.

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

I can't think of a major highlight, just several smaller ones.

One has been starting a new business Bailey Scanning limited. We do cow pregnancy scanning around the country. My wife Kiley runs the scanning business whilst juggling our three girls Zoe, Paige and Fern.

I have enjoyed helping drive the Amuri Squash Club's major renovations recently.

I also started the country's biggest hunting competition, The North Canterbury Hunting Competition last year, putting Rotherham on the map.

It's great being part of the awesome Amuri basin community.

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

If you want to be the best, surround yourself with the best people in the game. You can't soar like an eagle surrounded by turkeys.



Mat Bailey – a town boy before turning to farming.

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The experienced Ashburton PGG Wrightson Real Estate team are (from left) Mark Hanrahan, Dan van der Salm and Jeff Donaldson.

MID CANTERBURY RURAL PROPERTY SHOWING SOME BRIGHT SPOTS

After several months at a low ebb, some sectors of the Mid Canterbury rural property market are starting to brighten.

The Ashburton PGG Wrightson Real Estate team are experienced rural professionals, each with a strong local background knowledge over all the sectors, Dan van der Salm, Mark Hanrahan and Jeff Donaldson are ready to assist meeting all rural property objectives and achieving the best possible outcome for their vendors.

Dan has an extensive rural banking background spanning 15 years and Mark has extensive exposure in the arable, dairy and livestock industries within PGG Wrightson Mid Canterbury, including key account management and rural finance since 1994. Jeff is a third generation Mid Canterbury farmer, along with 30 years in the international mineral resource sector – accomplishing 15 years at board room

level within that time. So you can see that you are in great hands with the PGG Wrightson Ashburton team. They have the right experience and mindset to accomplish the best results possible for clients in all things real estate.

“Due to the more positive payout forecast, a trend that has been building in recent months, enthusiasm for dairy is now higher than it has been for the past few years and rising.

“Compared to a couple of years ago, when the mindset was much more downbeat, buyers and investors once again believe dairy has a positive future.

“With red meat schedules at low levels, sheep and beef properties have yet to attract similar interest. Land values in this sector need to reset before the market can reactivate. Farmers are waiting for the rural property cycle to start moving back into a positive mode.

“It has been good to see banks getting behind their clients and supporting them to meet their objectives and needs whilst there has been some strong head winds. Arable property with dairy support options have had a slight advantage and can benefit from the secondary income protection from otherwise unfavorable commodity price trends.

“With our versatile soils and good irrigation supply, we can grow anything here, meaning there is always opportunity in Mid Canterbury.

“Some big processors are now embedded in the region, and some are looking at non-traditional land use, particularly around horticulture and vegetable production. That provides opportunities for farmers to grow something different in their traditional farming systems, while others may be prompted to sell land. We have a new generation looking at our soils and water and asking, ‘what’s next for us?’

The right support and advice leads to new and greater opportunities for up-and-coming generations.

“We have a good selection of farms to bring to the market in the spring, so we look forward to seeing how the expectations around them play out.

“It is more important than ever that all professionals are used in conjunction to get the best result for all parties involved in property transaction.

“We believe the key is to be proactive and start the robust conversations around compliance and due diligence as early as possible when you are considering taking property to the market.

“Accurate and detailed information is essential when working in tandem with banks and accounts at the start of the process for a smooth and seamless settlement maximizing the property value and potential.

Early harvest for North Canterbury wine region

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

When Covid sent New Zealand into lockdown, Canterbury-based Craig Wiggins' usual work as a speaker and MC for events was effectively shelved. Undeterred, Wiggins turned to social media to connect with farmers and the rural community.

North Canterbury Wine Growers Association chairperson Matt Barbour says a hot, dry summer may mean an earlier-than-usual harvest for Waipara vineyards.

"I'd say we will have finished most of the harvest nearly April, which is earlier than usual.

"We have had an amazing start to the year.

"It was a bit of a cool spring, so everything was a bit slow leading up to Christmas, but everything had caught back up now."

Barbour, his wife Helen, and his parents have 8.5 hectares planted in grapes. 7.7 hectares of the vineyard is planted in Pinot Noir, with .6 hectares planted in Viognier.

Barbour is converting one hectare of Pinot Noir into Chardonnay using the grafting method.

These are currently sold to other winemakers, but the Barbours plan to launch their own label later in the year.

"The label will be called Fernbank, and we hope to have it out on shelves in around six months, which is pretty exciting.

"It's something I wanted to do after leaving Lincoln and studying viticulture there: own

a vineyard and make my own wine."

When not tending his vineyard, Barbour operates machinery for Greystone Wines and has recently started his own machinery business with his wife, Helen, Barocol Vineyard Management.

Waipara Valley wine is now marketed under the broader brand North Canterbury Wine, with the recent pre-harvest North Canterbury Wine & Food Festival helping to put the region on the map.

The export market remains uncertain post-COVID, but Barbour says that sales of white varietals are flourishing, while the market has dropped slightly for Pinot Noir.

"We are seeing increased sales of Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris, and Rosé markets have taken off in the last few years, with people making higher-quality Rosé rather than just working with what's left over."

Barbour said pétillant naturel (pét-nat) wine, which is naturally sparkling and unfiltered, is becoming popular in New Zealand.

"There's a lot of interest in the market for those, so it's cool for people to add those to their portfolio.

"There's a lot going on, but we are very reliant on the export market, and it's still very uncertain out there."

While restaurant trade has picked up, it is still not back to pre-COVID levels.

"With interest rates and the cost of living, people are shopping at supermarkets rather than going to restaurants," Barbour said.



The Waipara Valley is now marketed under the North Canterbury Wine Region brand.

PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON



White varietals remain popular in local and export markets.



Matt Barbour checks grapes at Greystone Wines vineyard.



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Out of her comfort zone

Young Farmers are the future of our agriculture sector, so each month we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmer member. Today we chat to **BAYLEE HODGES** from Whanganui Young Farmers.

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

Whanganui Young Farmers. I have been a member for six years.

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?

Meeting other like-minded people and getting out of my comfort zone. I've grown hugely since being a young farmers member.

3. How did you become involved in agriculture?

I was lucky enough to grow up on my grandparents' family sheep and beef farm.

4. What is your job now?

I am fifth generation on our family's 440ha sheep and beef farm in kai iwi Whanganui. Ever since a very young age I was determined to follow in my family footsteps and work on the family farm. I completed school and went straight

into working for my grandparents. In 2019 I spent three months in Scotland working on a farm during lambing and calving, then I returned home to my shepherding job on the family farm. In 2023 I took out first place at the Central Districts Shepherd Of The Year competition. This gave me and my parents the confidence and trust to move me into a block manager role, where I still am today.

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

I believe the future of farming in New Zealand is in good hands with the generation of young farmers coming through. Their determination and adaptability and good use of technology will benefit our farming sector hugely.

6. What are your future plans?

My goal is to start by leasing a block of the family farm and work my way up

into purchasing it.

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

My grandparents and my parents. Their dedication towards keeping our family's

legacy continuing, and their hard work ethic and wealth of knowledge that they have passed down to me. They are my biggest motivation to prove I can continue our family's legacy.



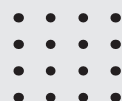
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Mushroom & lamb korma

Ingredients

Korma

- **450g** Quality Mark lamb sliced
- **½ Tbsp** vegetable oil
- **1 large** onion sliced
- **200g** pack swiss brown button mushrooms leave them whole
- **5 Tbsp** store-bought korma curry paste
- **400g** tin light coconut milk
- **200ml** chicken stock
- **250g** baby spinach leaves
- juice of 1 lime
- **4 Tbsp** Greek style yoghurt

To Serve

- brown rice

Method

Korma

Heat the oil in a large saucepan or

deep frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes or until softened.

Increase the heat to high, add the lamb and sauté for 5 minutes or until the meat is lightly browned all over.

Add the mushrooms and korma paste and cook, stirring, for another minute.

Add the coconut milk and stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 30-35 minutes until the sauce has reduced and the lamb is tender.

Add the spinach and stir over the heat for a minute or two until it has wilted.

Squeeze over the lime juice to taste, stir in the yoghurt to marble the sauce and serve with cooked brown rice.

– Recipe courtesy of
Beef + Lamb NZ
and Kiwi Mushrooms



Do I need extra Magnesium? (Part 1)

Magnesium is one of my most frequently prescribed supplements. This is because magnesium is used in multiple enzymes and effects most tissue types. In particular, it relaxes both nerves and blood vessels. Relaxing nerves is helpful for sleep and restless legs while relaxing blood vessels helps with lowering blood pressure and helping circulation.

Magnesium is involved in numerous body processes and can help problems in a different tissue types and body systems especially muscles. I recommend it for cramp, restless legs, PMS, hypertension and heart rhythm problems. I usually recommend that Magnesium be taken 30-60 minutes bed for maximum impact on muscles, nerves and to help with sleep. If taken for hypertension and daytime and evening dose is recommended.

I have many clients now largely free of night cramps and restless legs. In stubborn cases I also add a multi-mineral/antioxidant complex to help with nighttime circulation and improve



muscle function. It is rare that we cannot get improvements with these problems that can significantly disrupt our sleep. Unfortunately, many Magnesium supplements have just one form of magnesium and are 1 a day making dose experimentation almost impossible. In my experience the required dosage differs a lot between people with similar problems. Additionally, many supplements use cheaper low-grade ingredients which are harsh on the digestive tract. I prefer to use 3 different forms of Magnesium. While this makes manufacturing more expensive, each form of magnesium is absorbed differently.

I combine bioavailable marine (seaweed) sourced Magnesium with amino acid chelated Magnesium diglycinate with Magnesium citrate. I deliberately formulated the capsules to have a dosage range. Normally 2 capsules before bed will suffice but short term doses of 4 capsules can be used. Please contact me for personalised advice.

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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'Dawn Whistler'. Warren Hewson bringing a mob of merinos in for weaning at Ardour Station, Tarras.



Richard Nikolaison brings in a mob of merinos for winter shearing at Arrowsmith Station.

PHOTOS: ANNA MUNRO

Capturing the high country

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Mount Somers photographer Anna Munro's images of high country stations have evolved from a passion project to a priceless record of rural life and a side hustle to supplement farm income.

"It was all a pretty organic process, to be fair," Munro says.

Three years ago, Munro was living in Central Otago, where her husband Mitch worked as a builder, and she split her time between working as a physio in Wanaka and as a shepherd in Tarras.

"My working life was a bit

mixed," Munro said.

Munro's photography journey began in Canterbury when she was helping with the autumn muster at Lake Heron Station with her sisters.

She took a camera and posted photos onto social media through her new Facebook page, Muster.

"There was a really good response from it.

"You realise how much people love seeing pictures of the high country."

Despite having no formal training, and using a camera borrowed from her husband, Munro's images struck a chord with her followers.

People began wanting to buy

images, and due to demand, Munro released a calendar later that year, selling around 500 copies.

Munro saw an opportunity to make some extra income, while using the social media platform to show the positive side of agriculture.

"I was amazed at how many calendars sold, and I thought I could start a side hustle. I was also sick of hearing about people complaining about the rural-urban divide.

"I thought this is something I can do to shed some positive light on farming and try to tell an authentic story."

Munro began photographing

and sharing elements of farming life and was approached by agribusinesses for paid photography work.

"I've always kept it rural, because that's what I'm passionate about."

For young shepherds, time spent mustering on high country stations becomes a fond memory they will recall in later years, and Munro likes being able to help them keep those memories alive with her photographs.

"I've heard from a lot of older guys that mustering was the best years of their life, and they wish they had photos to look back on it.

"For some of the young

shepherds who leave school and go off mustering, they will be stoked to be able to look back at these days.

"The high country mustering scene is quite a special thing, and maybe it won't be around forever."

Last April, Munro and her husband Mitch moved from Otago to Mid Canterbury, taking over the lease of Munro's parents' sheep and beef farm, Cravendale, near Mount Somers.

The couple welcomed their first child, Charlie, seven months ago, and with a new baby and a farm to run, Munro felt under significant pressure and put photography on hold.

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Anna Munro with husband Mitch and son Charlie.

With Mitch new to farming, Munro was hands-on with farm operations, and the juggle of running the farm and a newborn took a toll.

“I’d be lying if I said we had a balanced life.

“It was really busy with having Charlie; I had quite a lot of

trouble breastfeeding and wasn’t in a good place.

“I don’t know if it was postnatal depression or pressure of trying to raise a baby without much sleep, but I ended up on anti-depressants last year, and they have been great.”

Mitch has learned the ropes of farm life quickly, and Munro says

the pressure has come off, and she now feels she can get back behind the camera lens.

“Mitch has picked things up and remembers things incredibly well.

“I’m pretty lucky now; if it’s been a rough night with Charlie, I can just stay inside, and he can run the farm.”



Mt Aspiring Cattle Muster, coming down the Matukituki Valley.

PHOTO: ANNA MUNRO

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Andy Fox's trip in the Silver Ghost last year took the car over some less than perfect terrain.



The Silver Ghost parked outside St Bathans' Vulcan Hotel.

Guardian of a Silver Ghost

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

When we think of a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost, it is usually associated with 1920s Gatsby-style opulence.

We don't usually associate the iconic car with a robust reliability that remains more than 100 years after it was first manufactured, but North Canterbury farmer

Andy Fox' 1922 Silver Ghost has been put through its paces many times since he has owned his vehicle, and it is still going strong.

"I've owned the car for 25 years, but I don't see it as my car.

"I'm just the guardian during my ownership."

The car was initially purchased by one of the owners of the NZ Herald newspaper, and its original body was replaced with

a sedan in 1928, which was common practice at the time.

The car was driven as a sedan until the mid-1930s, when, due to difficulty accessing parts, the car fell into disrepair.

It was given a new lease of life with a restoration in the 1960s, and in the 1980s it received a replica of its original body produced by Gulf Motor Bodies in Auckland.

"This body that's on it was a copy of what it was like in 1922."

Fox's most recent expedition in the Silver Ghost was November last year when he and five other Rolls Royce owners took the classic cars over the South Island's alpine passes.

The three-day trip saw the six cars traverse the Meyers Pass, Deans Pass, Thomson Gorge road and Mount Aspiring Station,

spending two nights in Wanaka.

The vintage cars cruised at around 50 miles an hour on the open highway and covered some less well-travelled routes, crossing creeks and shingle roads.

"I always tell people, if you want to drive fast, take a modern car.

"The nice thing about old cars is the journey becomes part of the enjoyment.

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The Silver Ghost on one of Italy's narrow streets in 2013.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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Fox navigates Thomson Gorge road.



The Stelvio Pass in Italy from Fox's 2013 trip.



Timmelsjoch mountain pass in Italy, 2013.



Andy Fox checks over the Silver Ghost during the European centennial event.

"The European philosophy is the enjoyment is the destination, and you get in your car and get there as quickly as possible."

"The Maori philosophy is the enjoyment is the journey."

The November South Island trip marks the tenth anniversary of a much more ambitious adventure when Fox took the Silver Ghost to Europe in 2013 as Rolls Royce enthusiasts recreated the 1913 Alpine Trial.

The original trial event, in which Rolls Royce entered four Silver Ghosts, spanned eight days

and around 2600 kilometres over alpine passes across Europe. The Silver Ghost won the 1913 Alpine Trial, awarding the vehicle the title of "best car in the world" and giving would-be car buyers faith in the engineering and robustness of the vehicle.

"In Paris, they put sealing wax on the bonnet and the radiator cap to prove that neither was opened during the trip."

"And then they drove the cars over the 31 alpine passes in Europe."

"Mainly Switzerland, but also Austria and Italy."

When Fox got the invitation for the centenary trial from the Holy Ghost Car Club, he was reluctant to go.

"There were just 100 reasons why I shouldn't go."

"We were busy on the farm; it was going to be expensive. I was on the New Zealand Meat Board and Beef + Lamb, and there were board meetings I needed to attend."

Fox's good friend John Chamberlain encouraged him to take the plunge and make the trip anyway.

"He said if you can't find the

time, just find the time. So that's exactly what we did."

Three cars from New Zealand attended the 2013 event, and the vehicles were shipped over in containers from Lyttleton to the U.K.

One hundred cars participated, with each vehicle only allowing a driver and navigator.

"We met some amazing people and drove those cars over 21 of the 31 passes they did 100 years earlier," Fox said.

When Fox isn't hitting the roads in the Silver Ghost, he resides on

his 1600-hectare sheep and beef farm, Foxdown, in Hurunui, which is now managed by his son George.

Fox is chairperson of Wool Research NZ, the E.B Milton Charitable Trust and the North Canterbury Farmers' Charitable Trust.

Foxdown regularly opens its doors to visitors who can view the on-farm museum, classic car collection and walk the farm walking track. A newly built modern hut sits with panoramic farm views, which people can book through Canopy Camping.

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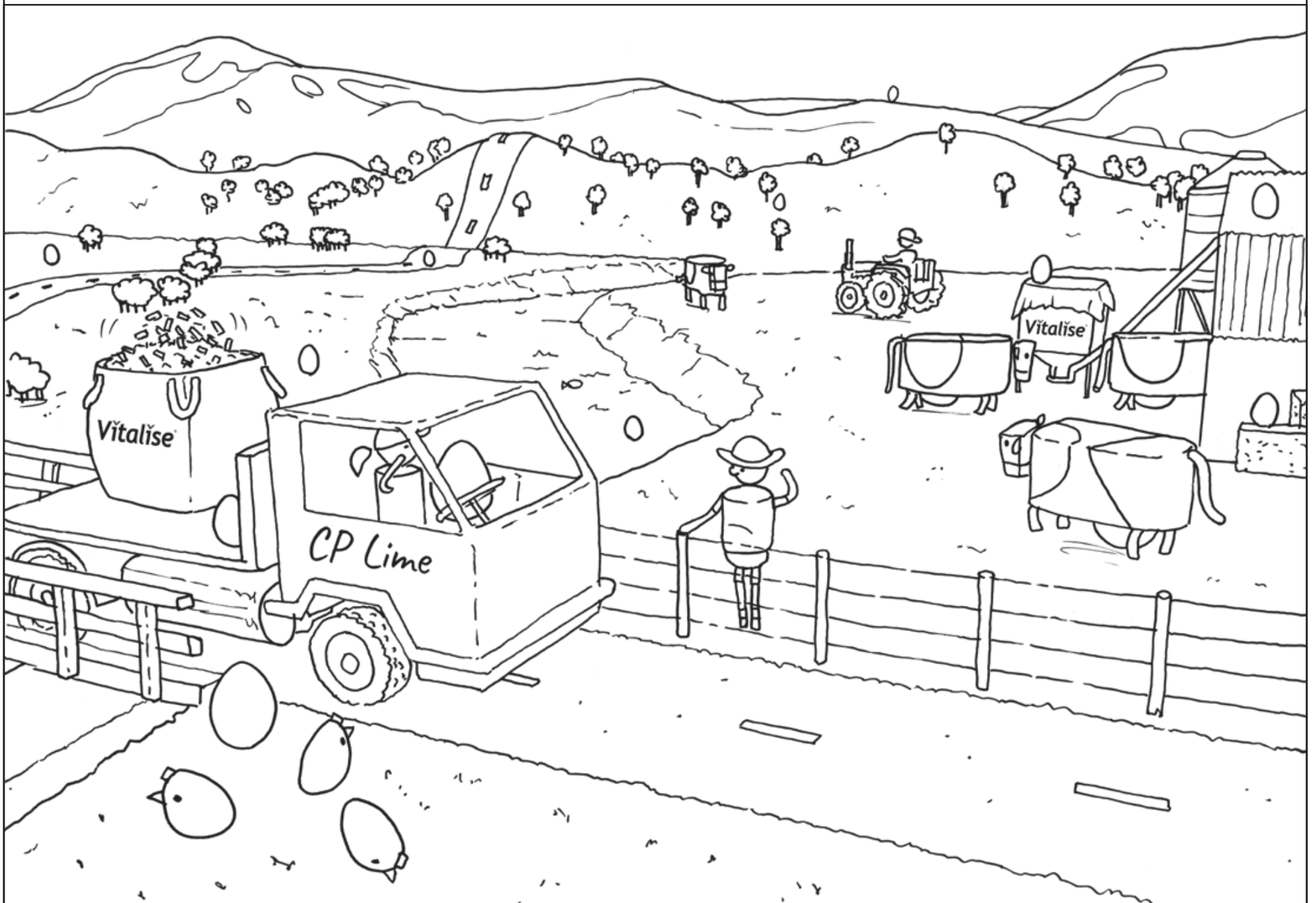
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PHOTOS: ARROWS FLIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Showing skills in the saddle

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

An equestrian sport with American roots has gained traction in New Zealand since it debuted in Geraldine in 2010.

The New Zealand Cowboy Challenge Association (NZCCA) supports nationwide challenges where riders compete over a series of obstacles, testing their horsemanship skills for competition points.

"The Cowboy Challenge is based on the principles of testing riders for things they would

come across in everyday ranch life," says NZCCA secretary and competitor Jordan Edwards.

"Things like roping a cow, pushing through trees, climbing over logs, dragging stuff behind you as if you were moving posts, or getting mail out of a letter box."

Edwards attended her first Cowboy Challenge in Greta Valley just over two years ago and was instantly drawn to the sport.

"The people were just incredible; they were so supportive.

"They explained every little thing and gave me tips on

the best way to complete the obstacle, even if it meant that you would go and beat them at the end of the day."

With Rookie and Youth, Intermediate and Open divisions, and a "Hi Points" challenge for horse and rider combinations, the challenge has a section for all abilities.

National awards are given to riders with the most points for each division, as well as Horsemanship, Sportsmanship, Most Improved Rookie and a Youth Good Sport Award.

Entrants in the challenge range

from just four years old to well into their eighties.

Competitors are judged on a score out of ten for their ability to navigate 13 obstacles and a separate score out of 20 for horsemanship.

"Horsemanship is a big component.

"It's about decisions you make for your horse, the way you are riding, the way you treat your horse."

Challenges are run by either clubs or individuals, with anywhere from 15-30 challenges happening each year across the

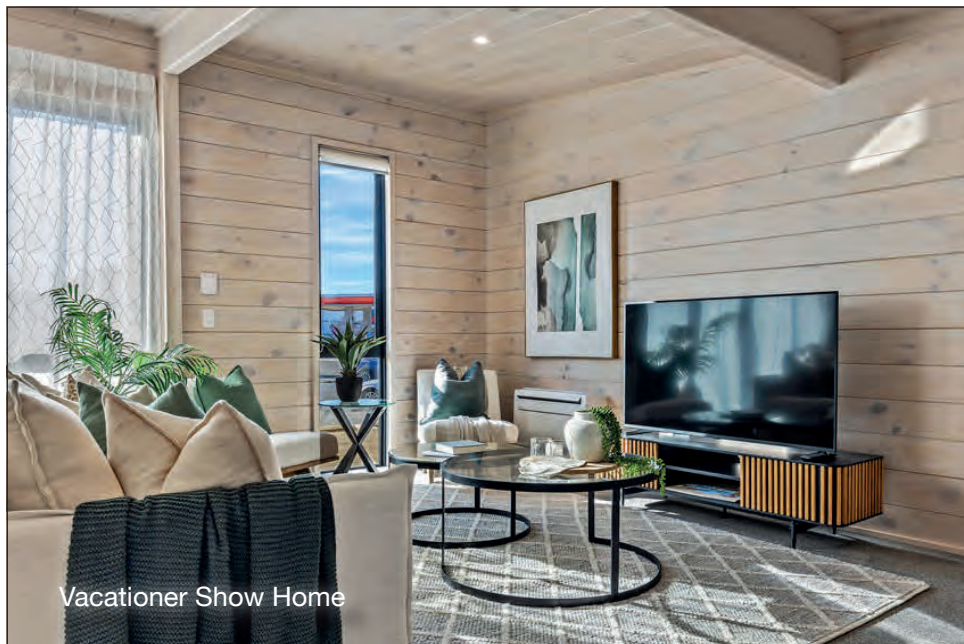
country, depending on the season and the grounds.

"Last year, the North Island got slammed by Cyclone Gabrielle and couldn't host a challenge anywhere; the ground just wouldn't allow it," Edwards said.

Edwards said that people become regular competitors once they try the Cowboy Challenge.

"I'd probably say that we have 80-90% of people that are hooked once they try it and do one challenge.

"We are trying to build numbers, get the word out there and encourage people to have a go."



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Positive support for new catchment group

The Ashburton Forks Catchment Group has been running for the past nine months.

Led by a committee of local farmers, Chris Allen, Richard Wright, Baden Somerville and Sarah Barker, the group is facilitated by local advisor Will Wright and comprised of keen, community-focused farmers who value the catchment approach to managing issues and creating solutions.

Early engagement has been strong with positive feedback and involvement from members.

The catchment group's broad footprint lies in the Ashburton Forks, Staveley, and Alford Forest areas, with a rough boundary of the Rangitata Diversion Race to the west, Thompsons Track to the east, and either side of the north and south branches of the Ashburton River.

Located close to the native bush-clad foothills, with many regionally significant waterways within the area, these features have driven members to focus

on long-term goals of enhancing local biodiversity and water quality.

Two workflows have got the ball rolling.

A monthly water quality monitoring programme where farmers take samples from select water bodies across the catchment has been set up.

Sampling will provide a greater understanding of what is happening and potentially inform targeted mitigations.

An independent consultant is assessing the robustness of the water quality monitoring programme, to allow peace of mind that the information being collected is fit-for-purpose for the future.

Predator and pest management are also being looked at by the group.

Many members have already undertaken significant planting projects. The leadership group identified that predator control is a crucial piece of the biodiversity puzzle, with possums and hares hammering newly-established native

vegetation before it can establish.

With the help of local pest control contractor Lawrie Aiken, one member removed just under 1000 hares and possums from his property in a month.

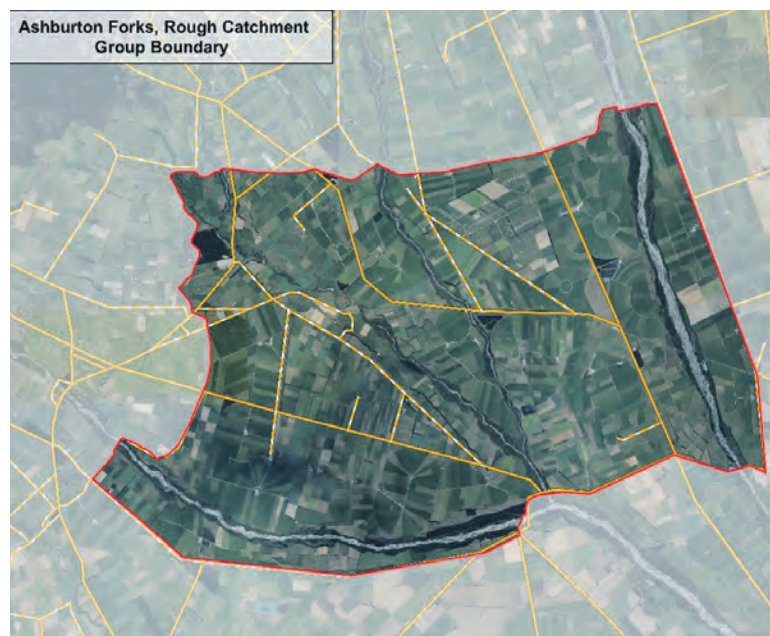
The group is aware that pests and predators can travel large distances daily, and it has been acknowledged that without a co-ordinated approach, it is likely new animals will quickly move in to replace old ones.

Many farmers are already trapping and shooting, and it is hoped that working together will allow for greater success.

The Ashburton Forks Catchment Group plans to run a pest and predator control month in April with the aim of further engaging members.

Support from the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC) has been pivotal to the group getting up and running and they want to extend their gratitude to MCCC for assistance to date.

Working closely with other catchment groups, DOC and



community groups in the catchment will ensure the group's work is co-ordinated, efficient and fit for purpose.

The Ashburton Forks catchment is a unique and special area, and it is great to

see the community getting involved to ensure this character is maintained into the future.

*–By Will Wright,
Facilitator Ashburton Forks
Catchment Group*



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Sustainability and strategic planning recognised

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Around 200 people gathered at the Chateau in Christchurch to showcase good farming practices and celebrate growers at the Canterbury Ballance Farm Environment Awards run by the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust.

The awards ceremony was held on March 7, with the Guild and Dunbar families of High Peak Station winning the coveted Regional Supreme Award.

The 3,760-hectare station is managed by an eight-way partnership running four businesses.

The partnership comprises of the Guilds – parents James and Anna, son Hamish and wife Gemma, son Simon and wife Kate, and daughter Amelia with husband Tom Dunbar.

James Guild said the family was 'honoured' to receive the award presented by last year's regional supreme winner, Ian Knowles from Glenmark Springs.

"We're hugely proud that what we have done at High Peak has been recognised in this way,"



Ballance farm Environment Awards Regional Supreme Award winners the Guild and Dunbar families from High peak Station. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Guild said.

Guild thanked the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust for showcasing what farmers in Canterbury can achieve.

"It shows the massive diversity we have running through the province."

High Peak Station is a traditional beef, sheep, and deer farm that has successfully diversified into tourism and honey through strategic planning.

The judges and the families recognised this, as well as the families' protection of the environment through natural wetlands, QEII covenants, and riparian planting.

"Politicians come and go, policies come and go, fashions come and go, but in the end, what really endures is the land and what we can do with it," Guild said.

"We are hugely proud as a family to be able to make a small

contribution and try to evolve our farm in a way that adds to New Zealand and looks after the environment."

The Guild and Dunbar families also won the following awards:

- Beef + Lamb New Zealand Livestock Farm Award
- Rabobank Agri-Business Management Award
- NZFET Biodiversity Award
- NZFET Climate Recognition Award

• Environment Canterbury Water Quality Award

Other Canterbury Ballance Farm Environment Award winners included:

John Wright and Richard Green – Wainono Dairy, Fairlie

• Ballance Agri-Nutrients Soil Management Award

• DairyNZ Sustainability and Stewardship Award

Andrew and Peter Gilchrist – Gilchrist Brothers, Swannanoa

• Hill Laboratories Agri-Science Award

• Norwood Farming Efficiency Award

• NZFET Innovation Award

Sam & Jo Spencer-Bower – Claxby Estate, Swannanoa

• Bayleys People in Primary Sector Award

The Supreme Winner from each of the eleven regions throughout New Zealand involved in the awards will be considered for the Gordon Stephenson Trophy at the trust's National Showcase in Hamilton in June.

The recipients of the Gordon Stephenson Trophy then become 2024's National Ambassadors for Sustainable Farming and Growing.

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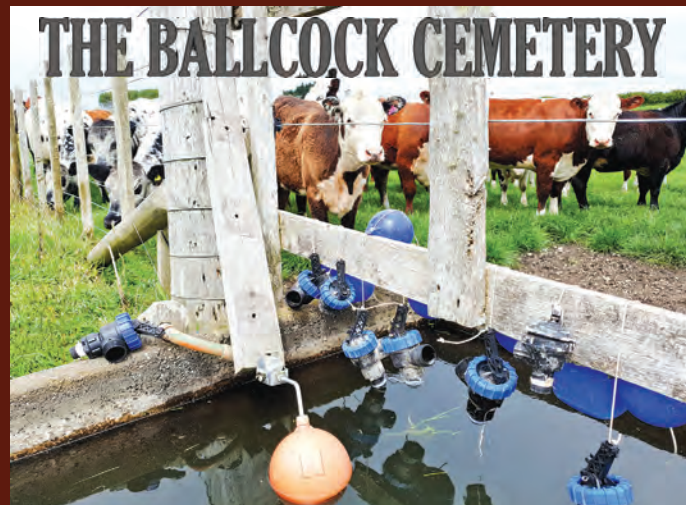
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Ram 1500 Limited, benchmark of toughness as well as luxury

The American pick up has always been one of those rare sights on NZ roads, with many of us that grew up with seeing them on TV at a young age on shows like Walker Texas Ranger, or in motocross videos where factory and freestyle riders get around with their bikes and gear loaded up, and then head for the hills living the dream!

Here the closest we could get in reality was a Ford or Holden ute, but they had limitations and compromises.

It was quite nostalgic when I started the Ram 1500 Limited for the first time and heard that rumble of the 5.7L V8 Hemi engine, only now I was also getting to experience the modern equivalent.

Modernity steps into the familiar old V8 rumble, the engine is an efficient mild hybrid with an eTorque system that seamlessly charges itself, and extra features like auto stop/start and in light driving it will shut off four of eight cylinders to do an efficient job of moving all 2670kg of truck around.

The Hemi produces 291kw at 5600rpm and 556Nm torque at 3950rpm which is actually quite similar power figures to a 3.0L Raptor, but in this case there's the added benefits if you need more

passenger space, a huge deck and a whopping 4500kg towing capacity.

I was actually surprised to see fuel consumption while I had the Ram at just over 14L/100km.

Despite its size, the Ram is actually pretty good to manoeuvre around town car parks. Parking sensors and 360 degree cameras help make it quite easy.

Off road capability of a Ram is very good, one of my favourite features is the adjustable air suspension, having the ability to adjust ride height to suit whatever you're doing at the touch of a button, road height which I noticed had a huge effect on fuel consumption and then when hitting the gravel or off-road the truck could be lifted right up for the best ground clearance.

In all conditions that I was able to try it in, the Ram handled it smoothly and with ease.

If using off the highway there's the choice to leave 2WD and select 4WD auto, 4WD High and 4WD low, all at the touch of a button.

Getting in and out of the truck is easy for anyone, of any height, because of the automatic folding side steps, which are also useful off-road because there's the peace



of mind they're tucked up out of the way where they won't get bent.

Inside the cab it's easy to appreciate it is the largest in its class and easily the most comfortable, even the rear passengers can enjoy good leg room and reclining seats for long trips.

There's no shortage of storage, cup holders and USB ports. Even wireless charging for phones in the front.

The leatherwork definitely makes you appreciate being in an opulent, luxury vehicle along with the quality you can't see in the 900 watt Harman Kardon sound system that has 19 speakers.

On nice days opening up the electric panoramic sunroof is a great experience.

On the key, it's very useful to have remote engine start and a tailgate open feature. A point of difference is that the engine will stay running once the truck is unlocked and you hop in to drive off; it bugs me with other vehicles that the engine shuts off when the door is unlocked.

Many things like that are quite easily customisable with the Ram, to get it dialled in to how you want it and quite rightly so with a vehicle of this calibre.

Back outside on the deck, the very useful Rambox is built into the

wellside, it is well-sealed lockable storage that can hold 69kg and we could just about get the lid shut with my 9yo daughter lying inside!

There's even drain bungs in them if you wanted to fill with ice to keep drinks cold, but mostly they'd be very handy for keeping all the things like strops and tools close at hand instead of rolling around in the deck.

If you've been thinking about whether a Ram would fit into your life, aside from needing a big rig for towing, and if the \$172,990 price tag for the Ram Limited gets you the value of a tough workhorse as well as a high level of luxury, then it absolutely does tick all the boxes!

Alternatively Euromarque in Christchurch can get you into the Ram truck ranging from the Warlock at \$108,000 right up to the TRX at \$250,000, bearing in mind they're all cheaper now there's no ute tax!

As always, feel free to get in touch with me if you want to know more.

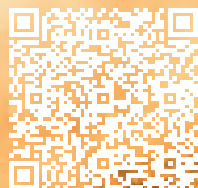


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A Wheely good weekend for machinery enthusiasts

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Agricultural machinery enthusiasts are in for a treat when the Wheat and Wheels Rally kicks off in Lauriston, Mid Canterbury, on April 6 and 7.

The event, run by the Mid Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club (MCMVC), will showcase vintage and new farm machinery, organiser and MCMVC spokesperson John Hall says.

"There will be modern machines, tracked machines, trucks, vintage cars, classic cars and motorbikes."

"It's a place where farmers can view the latest large machinery, too."

The ring is where all the action happens, with events running from 10am to 3.30pm on both days.

There will be a harvest parade, thrashing mill and chaff cutting demonstrations, and a special focus on the Farmall tractor, which is celebrating 100 years of production.

A highlight of the day will be a big-small parade, where some of the latest and largest equipment will be in the events centre ring with smaller agricultural machines.

"May Brothers Contracting is bringing their John Deere combine with a 45-foot front, and there will be a Caterpillar D9, which is a fairly big machine."

"We'll have the biggest crawler there, then we will have a little one in front."

Three hectares of wheat will be harvested by vintage machinery for spectators to watch, and Craig Wiggins will be on site with a registered nurse at the Carr Family Foundation Rural Health and Wellness van for free check-ups.

Food will be available for purchase, with Lauriston School holding a barbecue on both days.

A raffle for a 1956 Ferguson FE35 tractor, bought and restored by the club in its traditional grey and gold colours, will be drawn on the Sunday by a Methven police officer.

The club estimates the tractor is worth around \$4000, and raffle tickets are being sold for just \$5 each.

The raffle and event profits will be donated to the Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust.

Anyone entering a vehicle in the event will get free entry to the rally, while members of the public will pay \$15 at the gate, with free entry for children.



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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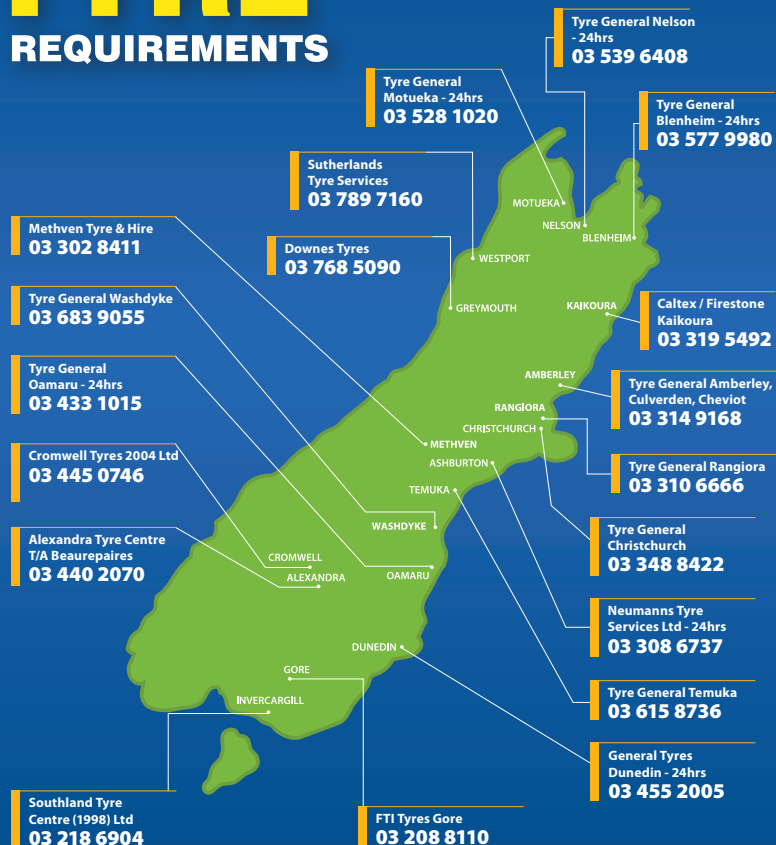
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Paula Hems is proud of her achievement to keep her business going with all the adversity the owner/operator of Rural People Ltd has had to navigate through over the past seven years, since its inception. We recently caught up with Paula and this is what she had to say.

As the great American Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "it's not the destination, it's the journey".

My journey has included, putting too much trust into the wrong people, Mycoplasma bovis (M. bovis), Covid, border closures, and a government which did not particularly like the one industry that keeps the country afloat, Paula said.

"So to say it has not been an easy journey would be an understatement".

Through it all, the one thing that has never wavered is her commitment, passion, and dedication to supporting

the dairy farmers of New Zealand.

"To keep my business going in these times has meant I have had to change the way I do things.

"I am currently running my company with little to no overheads, it is unfortunate that I also have had to cut staff numbers, but by doing so it has meant that I have been able to maintain my current fees."

In fact her fees have not increased since 2018.

"Although it has been tough making people redundant, I am now finding that I am able to give a more personalised service.

"I think it is comforting for any of us dealing with an external company, to know that we are dealing directly with the owner, and with my now 30 years' experience of working in HR and recruitment, I have fine-tuned my processes to ensure that the right person is placed in the right job."

Being a sole operator now means she gets to spend more time with each client.

"I have always taken the time to really understand the requirements of each individual, as everyone has different needs.

"From the feedback I am getting now,

my clients seem happier as well.

"Over the years they have come to know how I operate, and they appreciate being able to get hold of me when they need me, and for me not to be passing them off to other staff members.

Anyone can be a 'bums on seats' recruiter but that's just not the way Paula operates.

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Kelly-Anne Bentley is busy with a masters degree research that could introduce new meat testing technology and a way to charge higher prices for premium export meat.
PHOTOS: SHARON DAVIS



Kelly-Anne Bentley is among nine young New Zealanders awarded a scholarship by the Meat Industry Association this year.



Kelly-Anne Bentley is following in her grandfather's footsteps. He attended Lincoln University when it was Lincoln College.

A future industry leader

By Sharon Davis

A former Ashburton College student is on her way to becoming a potential leader in the meat industry with interesting research into meat quality and testing.

Kelly-Anne Bentley is among nine young New Zealanders from Southland to Northland awarded a scholarship by the Meat Industry Association this year for her masters degree identifying biomarkers in lamb meat and what they indicate about meat quality.

The Lincoln University student hopes to use machine learning to create a model to analyse meat and eventually develop test technology for the meat industry.

One of the markers she looks at is the acidity or pH of the meat. A high pH reading would indicate the meat would make a tough steak.

"It means the muscles aren't producing enough lactic acid to reduce the pH."

Bentley said her test technology would cut out steps for current meat tests, which require a 24-hour wait before testing, and

would allow for additional tests.

"The industry needs more tests to ensure customers get the best quality - and it means it's possible to put in a pay scale for quality steak," she said.

Her goal is to understand the quality of meat and reflect that in the market.

With technology, you can see the geographic region the animal is from, the feed and grazing systems they had, and even their gender.

Bentley said the tests could provide scientific proof for marketing labels and could be used to develop additional industry standards.

Her work on lamb meat is mostly centred on the export market.

"That's where we'll make money for the economy," she said.

The 22-year-old said she did not expect to end up in meat science.

"I fell into it and really enjoy it."

She had always wanted to be a chef or pursue a career in the food industry and decided on food science in year 11 at Ashburton College.

Her science teacher told them about golden rice, where scientists had edited the genes of the rice to make it more nutritious - and that piqued her interest. But she'd anticipated working with plant-based foods, not meat.

She completed an undergraduate degree in food science and continued her post-graduate studies in applied science.

"It's exciting to work with a heap of different companies and make industry connections."

Bentley said she had four supervisors for her masters degree and got "to bring together a whole heap of ideas".

In addition to the scholarship, Bentley has two other scholarships for her masters degree - one from Craigmere Sustainables and another from the John W and Carey McClain Trust.

The Meat Industry Association scholarship came with perks that included attending workshops and the annual meat sector conference, she said.

"They help you become leaders in the meat industry."

When she's not working on her research, you will find Bentley in the kitchen, tending the tomatoes, zucchini, and bed of chilies in her vegetable garden, or spending time with her partner who's an avid cart racer.

She also has two part-time jobs at the university, facilitating study sessions and lab tutoring.

Of her years growing up in Ashburton, Bentley said she was into competitive swimming

at school. With small business owners for parents she "wasn't able to get away with much" because everyone knew her parents.

After her masters, Bentley is looking at either a doctorate so she can move into research or a job in quality and regulation in the meat industry. However, the pilot study she hoped to do for her doctorate was hard to get funding or scholarships for.

Technology to print food

Kelly-Anne Bentley was also part of the Lincoln research team working on technology to print food.

Wait, what? Printing food is a thing?

Bentley said there were three-dimensional food printers that worked a lot like more traditional plastic 3D printers, but used rehydrated powdered food as "food ink".

The team tested printing different foods powders, such as peas, milk and meat. Bentley was involved in testing the proteins in the printed meat.

They printed food in the shape of castles and cool shapes like little geckos.

It was a good way to get children to eat nutrients without them knowing it, and also made the proteins and fats in the food more digestible, she said.

The printed food has the consistency of cake and could work well in hospitals and rest homes.

"It make the food easier to eat and more accessible."

Bentley said the technology was "cool" but needed a lot of work.

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Sharpshooter wins at awards

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

It was glitz and glamour at the Year of the Dragon-themed Canterbury/ North Otago Dairy Industry Awards, held in Ashburton on March 20, where an ex-Brazilian army sniper was judged to be the region's 2024 Share Farmer of the Year.

Alan da Veiga moved to New Zealand ten years ago and was new to farming when he arrived.

Da Veiga, who is contract milking on Dairy Holdings Ltd's 260-hectare, 1000-cow Leeston property, describes his career pivot to dairy farming as finding his passion.

"Since I began working in the dairy industry, I have never 'worked' again.

"I love that grass is converted into milk to feed people," he says.

As a first-time entrant, da Veiga won \$10,000 in prizes plus six merit awards.

Jaspreet Singh, a farm manager on Farmright Ltd's 382-hectare, 1415-cow property at Ashburton, won the 2024 Canterbury/North Otago Dairy Manager of the Year category.

Singh, who won \$6500 plus two merit awards and came third in the same category in 2021, says he was excited with the result.

"I've worked pretty hard for the last couple of years, but I also want to thank my farm team. We

all do things together."

Singh originally came to New Zealand to study business management, but with a farming background and seeing opportunities, he decided to pursue a career in dairy farming.

"Farming has lots of challenges, but I'm proud that I have progressed to manager of a large-scale farm from the beginning with no experience."

Singh thanked his employer, Farmright Ltd, for 'giving him the tools to improve'.

"I'm going to give it a good shot at the nationals, but I still want to do the same thing I do every day, to farm better. That's my goal."

The 2024 Canterbury/North Otago Dairy Trainee of the Year award went to Monique Radford, a first-time entrant and Ashburton farmer.

Radford, a herd manager on Leighton and Michelle Pyes' 241-hectare, 900-cow property, collected \$6,500 in prizes and two merit awards.

Radford said she wasn't expecting to even make it into the top six when entering.

"It was so competitive this year, so it's an awesome feeling to have won it.

"I'm proud of myself."

Radford said she had been nervous about the skills part of the competition, but the judges put her at ease, and she finished



Canterbury/North Otago Dairy Industry Award winners Monique Radford, Alan da Veiga and Jaspreet Singh. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

the day feeling confident. The interview process also allowed her to revisit her goals.

"It was good to see how far I have come since I started working here and how much my life has changed since then."

Radford is taking some time off the farm to enjoy a well-earned trip to Rarotonga before she returns to focus on preparing for the national finals.

"Once I'm back, I'll get stuck into it, start practising my practical skills again, and ask my manager, Hamish, to help me with some other things I might

not be so confident about."

The national award titles will be announced at the Dairy Industry Awards National Gala Dinner on May 11 in Queenstown.

Canterbury/ North Otago Dairy Industry Merit Awards:

Share Farmer Merit Awards:

- DairyNZ – People and Culture Award Alan da Veiga
- Ecolab Total Farm Hygiene Award Alan da Veiga
- Federated Farmers Leadership Award Myfanwy Alexander
- Honda Farm Safety, Health and Biosecurity Award Alan da Veiga
- LIC – Animal Wellbeing,

Recording and Productivity Award Alan da Veiga

- Meridian Environmental Sustainability Award Wilma Dickey
- Ravensdown Sustainable Pasture Award Alan da Veiga
- ASB Business Performance Award Alan da Veiga
- JEH Grazing & Livestock Ltd Emerging Talent Award Myfanwy Alexander

Dairy Manager Merit

- DeLaval Livestock Management Award William Gard
- Fonterra Dairy Management Award Jaspreet Singh
- GrainCorp Feeds NZ Environmental Sustainability Award George Dodson
- FarmRight Pasture & Feed Management Award Lauren McConnachie

• Dairy Holdings Ltd People & Leadership Award George Dodson

• CowManager Planning & Financial Management Award Jaspreet Singh

• Vetlife Emerging Talent Award Kieran Gannon

Dairy Trainee Merit Awards:

- DairyNZ Practical Skills Award Monique Radford
- TH Enterprises Ltd Emerging Talent Award Todd Coull
- FMG Farming Knowledge Award William Renall
- Craigmore Communication & Industry Involvement Award Monique Radford

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Agfest a highlight on West Coast rural calendar

By Claire Inkson

claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Agfest, the West Coast's biggest event, is coming to the Greymouth Aerodrome again this April 12-13.

The event was previously held in spring due to Covid restrictions, but is now back at its traditional time of autumn, which farmers have welcomed, event co-owner Andy Thompson says.

"Farmers and contractors prefer the autumn date due to time availability, and the weather is more settled at this time of year," Thompson said.

The biennial event, which is in its seventh year, sees around 15,000 visitors through its gates over the two days.

Thompson said the event caters for both rural and townspeople, with a good mixture of both attending.

"It's a rural event, but we do have a large non-rural crowd that comes along, so we make sure we have something that will interest them."

Sturgeon Amusements will provide fairground rides for children, and there will be retail stands and a vast selection of

food sites and entertainment.

The hotly-contested Creative Gumboot competition is back, with entries closing at 9 am on Friday, April 12, and judging on Saturday, April 13.

Thompson describes Agfest as "like an A&P show, but without the animals".

"We want townspeople just to walk around and sample what a rural field day is all about."

For farmers, there will be all the usual trade sites and opportunities to network and connect.

"The rural population comes to do their purchasing and research."

"There are a lot of products sold, but also a lot of rural professionals providing information to the rural community as well."

Attendees and exhibitors come from all over the South Island, with the event boosting the Greymouth economy.

"It's a big event for the local economy for that week. Several hundred exhibitors from all over the South Island come in over the two days, and then we get all the people coming to the event."

"So accommodation and bars are full."

Agfest supports a charity each year, and this year the event has aligned with Ranui House and the Bone Marrow Cancer Trust.

Ranui House provides accommodation and support to patients and their families who are visiting Christchurch for medical treatments such as chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants, heart surgery, high-risk pregnancies, neonatal care and kidney transplants.

Bone Marrow Trust chief executive Mandy Kennedy said the trust was excited to be a charity partner of Agfest.

"We serve families from all over the South Island at Ranui House, and approximately a third of them come from the West Coast."

"We are opening a new house, Ranui Apartments, later this year because we are full virtually all of the time."

"We would like to use the funds that we raise at Agfest to put towards our new house so that we can serve more families from the West Coast in the future."

Funds for the charity will be raised at Agfest through a tug-of-war, charity auction and donations at the gate.



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



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Agfest : All you need to know for a great experience

- Agfest location - Greymouth Aerodrome (1 Aerodrome Road Blaketown, Greymouth).
- Parking: Agfest offers a Park and Ride, all you have to do is Park your car and catch a ride in the courtesy van doing a continuous circuit around the

Blaketown area (around the airport) and you'll be dropped at the main gate to enter.

- Opening Times: 8.30 - 4.30 both days.
- Ticket sales : Gate sales available on the day or buy online at www.agfest.co.nz.

Ticket prices are \$15 for adults, 12 - 6 years \$5, under 5 year olds are free.

- Key Highlights: Agfest is the biggest event on the West Coast, The Cam Scott Band, tug-of-war with funds raised going to Ranui House,

amusement rides for kids, fantastic food stalls, great retail stands, the latest and greatest in the rural sector.

- Best place to follow for information: follow Agfest on Facebook or at www.agfest.co.nz

- Where to stay: Ross to Punakaiki, even Moana - it's only a 30-40 min drive to central Greymouth - there are probably still some beds available in Greymouth - if not look further afield to Hokitika, Ross, Punakiki or Moana.

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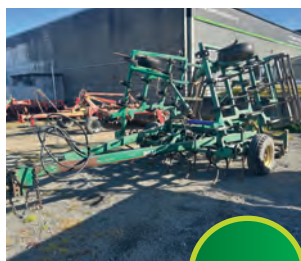
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Piglets hog the spotlight at successful Mayfield show

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

The air was filled with the sounds of oinks and the roar of diggers at the annual Mayfield A&P Show.

The Show, which was held on March 9, was the 98th year of the event, and Mayfield A&P president Ben Morrow says he was extremely happy with how the day went.

"We had a great day weather-wise, there was a really good turn out and the competitions went well," Morrow said.

Pig Racing was a highlight of the day for spectators, with races held on the hour as sponsored piglets went head-to-head over a challenging obstacle course to the roar of the crowd.

Morrow's father introduced pig racing to the show 31 years ago.

"My Dad is helping my brother-in-law with the pig racing this year, it's quite cool having him involved."

"My parents, who are both past presidents, have been a great support these last few days."

"My mother has a great nonsense attitude, she just gets on and gets stuff done."

Digger operators tested their skills in the first ever Foothills Engineering Skills Champion Competition, completing intricate tasks such as pouring tea from a teapot, moving tyres and popping the lid off a bottle.

Alistair Parris from Mt Somers Excavation took home the trophy, and said the competition was a good way to demonstrate the skills involved in operating an excavator.

"It's part of the skills you use every day. It's not all just crash and bash."

"If you are digging around power cables, for example, you have to be able to control the machine," Parris said.

Methven Heli Rural provided helicopter rides for those wanting a birds-eye view of the event, and children were kept entertained as Greg Britt,

better known as Elgregoe the Magician, performed magic tricks.

A children's pig catching competition also proved a popular drawcard for the crowds. Trade exhibitors were well represented at this year's show, with the Best Trade Site award going to Diesel tech from Methven.

A mixed pipe band with members from Ellesmere Pipe Band, Mackenzie Highland Pipe Band and the Timaru Scottish Society played throughout the event, as well as leading the Grand Parade.

TV presenter, author and Rural Support ambassador Matt Chisholm was onsite at the Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust tent.

Morrow said the show is an important way to get the community together, and encouraged farmers to have a day off-farm.

"It's such a good opportunity to get people out, and for people to catch up and chat."

"It's a good community day out for everyone."



Pig racing was a crowd favourite.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

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Methven A&P Show a ripper

Despite a southerly hitting Mid Canterbury the day before, the region woke to a crisp, sunny morning with fresh snow visible on the mountains for the 108th Methven A&P Show day.

A&P president Trevor Monson said the committee had been following the weather forecast and was confident that the sun

would be shining for the event, held on March 16 at the Methven showgrounds.

"We came in guns blazing despite the weather and set everything up.

"And then the sun came out on the day, and we had a lot of people through the gates."

Monson said the show had record trade

site numbers and was happy with the layout of the event.

"The flow of the show was really good.

"We put food stands in the trade area to keep people walking around the sites."

RuralCo was awarded Best Small Trade Site, while Wareings Transport, which will celebrate fifty years in business next year, was awarded Best Large Trade Site.

Monson said he joined the committee thirteen years ago when he moved to the area and had found being involved in the A&P Association a great way to meet people and get involved in the community.

"The theme of our show is 'get involved in your community'," Monson said.

He credits the committee for the show's success.

"The subcommittee just gives it their all. They take pride in the show and do a good job, and everything just falls together."

The animal shed, which boasts a new extension, was a highlight of the show, with Truffles the Water Buffalo stealing the limelight.

An arts precinct showcased local artists such as Olivia Bezett, Jude Gibson, and Amanda King, who is well known for her livestock photography business, By the Horns.

There was plenty on offer for children, including a sheep colouring competition

sponsored by Rabobank, free face painting and balloon animals, and an array of sideshow entertainment.

Show favourites sheep shearing and wood chopping drew crowds, and equestrian events ran throughout the day.

Vintage machinery enthusiasts had plenty to look at with the Mid Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club display of vintage tractors.

The Methven Ute Muster, which runs inside the A&P showgrounds and is part of the event, drew over seventy vehicles, from vintage to new.

Ute Muster organiser Craig Elliott said he was extremely happy with the event's growth and the number of entries this year.

"We have had a big array of utes coming in, and we have had great support from our sponsors, with over ten different companies sponsoring this year."

The Ute Muster had ten categories for every kind of ute, from the Dirtiest or Roughest to the Best Accessorised and Best Shepherd's ute.

At an awards ceremony held at lunchtime, over \$5000 worth of prizes were given out to category winners.

A ute tug-of-war between a late model Toyota Hilux and an older model Volkswagen Amarok followed the grand parade, which was led by the Ashburton Pipe Band.

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