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Page 3

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No more than 100 words.

We reserve the right to edit or not publish.

Send all letters to:

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Remembering Ham

There are rare people who bind rural communities together like glue – those who are always involved in committees, on the sidelines of every rugby match, and at every school fundraiser.

They are the first to help, with no expectation of anything in return.

That was Nick Hamilton, known to all in the Hurunui fondly as “Ham”.

I consider myself lucky to have called Nick and his wife Megan friends.

When I was running drought appeals in 2016, trying to get media coverage for the crisis, Nick was a huge support.

He embodied the very essence of rural spirit – larger than life, with a laugh that seemed to come from deep within and would bounce off the walls.

It was contagious, hearty and loud.

When he was on your side, it felt like you had a cheerleader in your corner.

Nick was vibrant, funny, critical, opinionated and brazen.

He was a terrible but enthusiastic singer and an even worse dancer.

Yet, when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour three years ago, it was unfathomable that anything could stop someone so exuberant.

And for a while, nothing did.

When Nick and Megan sold the farm after his diagnosis, he didn’t wallow despite parting with a farm that meant so much to him.

Instead, they embraced life in Christchurch. Nick brought his rural community spirit with him to the city.

Despite undergoing treatment, he quickly joined the Neighbourhood Watch and, with Megan, helped establish and manage a neighbourhood sharing shed.

Family was everything to Nick.

He was immensely proud of his three children, always putting them first, and Megan was absolutely the love of his life.

One friend described them as a “double act”, and I can’t think of a better description. Their relationship was one of warmth, loyalty, love, banter and fun.

I always considered them the gold standard of a happy marriage – a true partnership.

I was fortunate to stay in their guest room in Burwood while I searched for my own house in Christchurch.

There were many of us who were welcomed into their home with open arms.

It was a warm, inclusive and fun household.

Nick often made late-night runs for McFlurries when Megan and I had cravings, and mornings started with a knock on my door for an early walk with the dogs.

When I purchased my house, Nick was there to help from the open homes right through to helping with the paperwork and finance.

Nick was a good friend to so many.

He faced his diagnosis with positivity, courage and grace.

He set the tone for how we treated him while he was sick and how we remember him now.

He hung up his boots December 5, surrounded by the love of his family.

A person whose spirit was pure sunshine leaves a shadow when they are gone.

But Nick’s light was so bright, his spirit so fiercely vibrant, that it will forever shine in the hearts of all he touched – in the love of his wife and children and in every brick and every bolt of the Omihi Hall.

You can read more about Nick on page 10.



acl
Ashburton Contracting Limited



Photo: Supplied.

ACL for winter vehicle maintenance

Winter is the perfect time to service your vehicle and avoid costly breakdowns by acting now.

That’s the word from Ashburton Contracting Limited’s vehicle maintenance experts Willie Jacobs and Craig Tutty.

Their message especially applies to farm machinery so once your harvest is done and dusted, they suggest organising the time to service your trucks, trailers, and utes.

“After harvest, many people forget to check their vehicles,” Craig said.

“They’re so busy during harvest,

that once it’s over, they think they can relax and forget about their trucks and trailers. But this can lead to big problems later.”

Skipping maintenance could result in vehicles failing when they’re needed, whether for work or travel.

“Imagine trying to start your truck and finding out that it won’t work or that something is broken,” he said.

“So, getting maintenance done before winter is a great way to prevent those problems. It’s all about making sure everything is ready to go when the next busy season comes.”

Willie echoes that sentiment, pointing out that unaddressed issues can lead to expensive repairs.

“When something breaks, it can cost a lot of money to fix,” Willie said.

“Not only does this cause stress for the driver, but it can also cause delays. That’s why it’s a good idea to check everything before you’re in a rush to use the vehicle again.

“The colder months are a good time to take care of those jobs. Most places are quieter, so there’s more time to fix things.”

And, as they both stressed, ACL is a

leader in that vehicle maintenance field because they can get the job done quickly.

“If you plan ahead and get maintenance done now, you can avoid problems later,” Craig said.

“The team at ACL is ready to help, so make sure to book your vehicle in today.”

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Above – Pukatea Dairy Farm in the Amuri Basin was praised by Ballance Farm Environment Awards judges for setting a high standard in balancing productivity with environmental responsibility. Left – Canterbury Ballance Awards regional supreme winner Stuart Neill. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Embracing change gets results

CLAIRE INKSON

Culverden dairy farmer Stuart Neill will park up his tractor and head for the big smoke in June when he attends the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust (NZFET) National Showcase in Wellington.

Neill, who was named the supreme winner of the Canterbury Ballance Farm Environment Awards at a ceremony in Christchurch on March 6, will now compete against 11 other regional supreme winners for a chance to win the national title and the prestigious Gordon Stephenson Trophy.

The winner will be announced at the showcase on June 18.

Neill, who farms at Pukatea Dairy Farms, said he was normally reluctant to “stick his head up” but felt that entering the awards was giving back to those who had supported his farming journey for the past three decades.

“I’ve been in partnership with the same people for 30 years; they were investors that I worked for and now work with in an equity

partnership, so it was a way of giving back to them.”

Despite feeling nervous at the regional awards night, Neill found the NZFET team to be very supportive.

“The judging process was so much fun, and even if you don’t win, you learn so much just by reflecting on what you do and why you do it.”

Judges for the Canterbury Awards praised Pukatea Dairy Farms for setting a high standard in balancing productivity with environmental responsibility.

The 221-hectare (200-hectare effective) dairy farm in the Amuri Basin stood out for its holistic approach to sustainability, integrating environmental, financial, and social considerations into every aspect of the business.

Neill’s exceptional wetland management and riparian planting efforts were particularly highlighted as a true investment in the farm’s future.

“I’m very passionate about the environmental aspects of dairy farming, and I think that message is really important.”

Neill said that what he enjoys

most about farming is working with the topography, land and water, rather than against it.

“How I explain it to people, is that I want to integrate the topography, animals, people and the structure we put on the farm into the farming system.

“I’m really interested in dairy farm systems, how those things interact and what happens if you change things.”

While many farmers are resistant to change, Neill embraces it.

“I love change; I drive the guys that work for me mad.

“I love things that work and improve the system.”

That drive for innovation has led to a series of changes on the farm, including a one-person dairy shed with automatic drafting, grain feeding, heat detection, auto teat spraying, and an auto backing gate.

One of the most notable transformations has been reducing milkings from 14 per week to 10.

This shift, motivated by a desire to improve animal welfare and enhance work-life balance for the farm team, has yielded positive results for both the herd and the

farm’s overall sustainability.

“Flexible milking has been fantastic; it completely changed the dynamic,” Neill said.

“The more we improve the cows’ experience, the more the people enjoy it.

“The effect on both the cows and the people has been unbelievable.”

In awarding Neill the Regional Supreme Award, judges commended Pukatea Dairy Farms as an outstanding operation that consistently chooses the right path over the easy one.

The farm’s long-term environmental initiatives, strategic grazing practices, and unwavering commitment to ethical, sustainable farming serve as an inspiration to others in the industry.

“I feel like we haven’t finished the journey, but we’re in a really good place.

“We’ve created a system where all the different elements support each other, rather than working against one another,” Neill said.

He also won the DairyNZ Sustainability and Stewardship Award, the Environment Canterbury Water Quality Award and the FMG Risk

Management Award.

Other winners

Other Canterbury Ballance Farm Environment Award winners include:

Matt and Heidi Hart — Pye Group: Long Lane Farm, Rakaia
Ballance Agri-Nutrients Soil Management Award
Bayleys People in Primary Sector Award
Hill Laboratories Agri-Science Award
Norwood Farming Efficiency Award
Rabobank Agri-Business Management Award

Will Wilding — Te Mania Angus, Cheviot
Beef + Lamb New Zealand Livestock Farm Award
NZFET Biodiversity Award
NZFET Innovation Award

James and Samara Wright — Forest Creek Station, Rangitata Gorge
NZFET Climate Recognition Award
Hurunui District Landcare Group
Catchment Group Showcase Award

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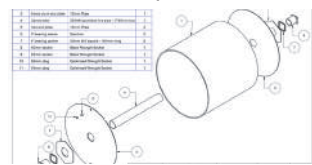


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A day of ag fun in Methven



It was all go at the Methven A&P Show, with spectacular weather adding to a fun day out for all ages. Claire Inkson went along with her camera to check out the action.



Above – Colin Maw from the Methven Ploughing Association.
Below – Steam engines are always a popular attraction at the Methven show.



Above – Methven Fire Brigade members (from left) Matt Duncan, Donna Lindsay and Ash Pace with the vintage 1969 International fire truck.

Above – Mark Jacobs with his Dodge A14, which he calls the Happy Truck because “it makes you smile whenever you drive it”.
Below – Fantastic weather encouraged a good turn-out for the show.



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MACKENZIE HIGHLAND A&P SHOW: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



The 127th Mackenzie Highland A&P Show – What you need to know before you go:

Show location: Fairlie Showgrounds

Show date: Easter Monday, 21 April 2025

Parking: free, off of School Road. Handicapped parking available.

President: Charles Waters

Opening times: from 8am

Tickets: \$20 adult, \$5 (age 5-15), under 5s free

Highlights: Entertainment from Yipadee and Jae Bedford Entertainment, The Mackenzie Shears, Sheep Auction, Golden Fleece Competition, Wood Chopping, Sheep Dog Trials,

Huntaway Bark-Off, Vintage Machinery, Helicopter Rides, Mackenzie Highland Pipe Band, Highland Dancing, Country Kids Agri-sports, Point Lumber Fencing Competition, Royal Canin NZ Dogs Show, Pedalmania, Archery, Pet Tent, Fairlie Four Square Lolly Scramble, Grand Parade, Carnival Rides, lots of shopping, food and much more.

Best place to follow for information:

General info and how to enter etc <https://www.mackenzieshow.co.nz> AND more up-to-date info <https://www.facebook.com/mackenzieshow> questions via email to mackenzieapsociety@gmail.com

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A & P Show competitions!

A Fairlie good day out for everyone

CLAIRE INKSON

The sleepy town of Fairlie, gateway to stunning landscapes of the Mackenzie country, will be bursting at the seams this Easter Monday when gates open to the 127th Mackenzie Highland A&P Show.

This year's Mackenzie show president, sheep and beef farmer Charlie Waters, has been involved in the event since his heady days as a Young Farmer in the 1980s.

"I was originally put on the management committee in 1986 through the Fairlie Young Farmers Club, but I worked with the young farmers in the sheep pens before that," Waters said.

The event is the biggest one-day show in the South Island and is popular with people on their way home from the Wheels at Wanaka machinery show and those looking for a family day trip from neighbouring towns and cities.

Waters said the show helps give city-dwellers a country experience.

"It gives people that live in town the opportunity to see an animal face-to-face. 'Otherwise, many people don't realise what an animal is.'"

Pleasant Point Young Farmers Club will be overseeing the pet tent, where children can get hands-on experience with livestock.

"For some children, it might be their first time doing that."

Waters said weather permitting, helicopter rides would be a highlight of the event and provide a bird's-eye view for showgoers of the breathtaking Mackenzie country.

For the less adventurous, the usual show staples are on offer, too.

"We've got all the usual horses, dog trials, alpacas, wood chopping, highland dancing and the Mackenzie Shears."

Children's author and musician Dean O'Brien, known by his stage name Yipadee, will provide children's entertainment, and the talent show will be back again with Jae Bedford.

A bark-off will take place in the main ring, and the ever-popular



Above - Dog trials are always a crowd favourite at the Mackenzie show.

PHOTO GLEN INNES PHOTOGRAPHY

Right - The ever-popular clydesdales will be doing the rounds at the Mackenzie Highland show.

PHOTO SUPPLIED



fencing competition returns, although last year's competition left its mark.

"The posts are still in the ground from last year, we can't get them out."

Waters said the show was good family entertainment at a cheap rate, and the committee hoped to have something everyone would enjoy, but it was the people through the gates on the day that made the event shine.

"It's the people that come make the show a success. If the people didn't come, we wouldn't have a show."



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Our Wish List for the New Reserve Bank Governor

As you'll all be aware, RBNZ Governor Adrian Orr has dramatically ended his tenure midterm. His eventful seven-year stint was marked by controversy and unprecedented challenges, making a tough scorecard inevitable. Nevertheless, the reign of Orr is over. Long live the new king! With a new governor about to be elected, here's eight things we'd like them to seriously consider.

1. Reduce the Capital Requirement

Differential Between Home and Agri Lending This one's obvious. The RBNZ must reduce the risk-weighted asset (RWA) difference between Agri and home loans.

This imbalance has restricted capital to productive sectors since 2015, funnelling billions into home loan growth. Agri loan losses are minimal, yet banks charge higher margins to justify extra capital weighting.

This drains money from provincial New Zealand, stifling productivity and export earnings.

2. Roll Back Proposed Capital Increases for All Types of Lending.

This differs from the above. The RBNZ wants all types of lending to hold higher capital buffers than required internationally, targeting a 1-in-200-year risk event instead

of the standard 1-in-100-year tolerance. But remember, New Zealand banks weathered the GFC & Covid pandemic with far lower capital and core funding ratios than today and immaterial losses

3. Encourage New Lending Entrants into Agri by Lowering Capital Ratios for New Banks.

Would it surprise you that any new deposit taker lending to Agri face higher capital requirements than the majors? This discourages competition and contradicts the RBNZ's financial stability mandate. More lending players reduce 'too-big-to-fail' risk.

On the bright side, we see strong interest in new Agri lending. NZAB has already secured alternative lending capital for Agri, with new options hitting the market soon. The best way to hold banks more accountable for additional margins is to foster more competition.

4. Fund Stats NZ to Ensure Monthly (Not Quarterly) CPI Updates.

It's absurd that New Zealand lacks monthly full CPI updates. We get a selected monthly price index, but full CPI remains quarterly, leaving a near four-month lag before new inflation data. This delay prolonged the

recession, as the RBNZ waited too long to see inflation ease before adjusting rates.

This is an easy fix—allocate more resources to Stats NZ to improve data timeliness.

5. Focus More on Forward-Looking Indicators, Not Just Lagging Data.

Monetary policy is like steering the Titanic—slow to turn. So why base OCR decisions solely on lagging CPI data? We should incorporate leading indicators like the Producer Price Index (PPI) Consumer Confidence Index (CCI), Employment Intentions & Private Sector Credit Growth & M3 Money Supply. With AI driven analytics in our forecasting tools, this should be straightforward.

6. Hold Monthly OCR Meetings.

Currently, the OCR is reviewed only seven times a year—insufficient in today's fast-moving economy. The RBNZ should meet monthly and tie updates to real-time data improvements.

7. Consider Making 'Economic Growth' a Dual RBNZ Mandate

I'm mixed on this; previous dual mandates (like 'maximum employment') didn't work well. However, if RBNZ had to consider growth, we'd see OCR settings supporting economic

expansion. This would likely keep inflation at the upper end of the target band rather than the middle or lower. In close-call decisions, preference should be given to growth over restriction.

Beyond policy, the RBNZ should be a pro-growth voice, signalling to both government and investors that New Zealand welcomes capital inflows.

8. Address Floating Mortgage Pricing in the Home Loan Sector.

This isn't just an Agri-specific issue, but an opportunity to improve economic responsiveness.

In Australia, 80% of home loans are floating. In New Zealand just 10%. Why? New Zealand banks don't compete on floating rates, making them uneconomical for borrowers compared to fixed. Banks prefer fixed loans because it locks in customers, but this delays monetary policy's impact.

When the OCR changes, it takes 6-12 months to filter through the New Zealand economy versus near-instant effects in Australia. In a rising market, this delay means rates must go even higher, exacerbating the issue.

Andrew Laming - Director

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OTAGO / SOUTHLAND

8 YOUNGCOUNTRY

Putting the spotlight on Young Farmers



Bryce Win competing at the season 57 Tasman district FMG Young Farmer of the Year finals.
PHOTO GEORGINA WOODS

Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand Agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmers Club member. Today we talk to Tasman Valley Young Farmer Bryce Win.

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

I'm part of the Tasman Valley Young Farmers.

I've been a member since we started the club four years ago.

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?

Joining young farmers gave me a reason to get out.

Before I was happy to stay in and keep to myself.

Now there's always a good yarn

to be had, whether it's a meeting or some of the great events we've had as a club.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?

Agriculture has been a part of my family for six generations.

We have been in the same area for nearly 150 years.

My earliest memories are of helping my old man feeding out in winter.

I didn't really think of it as his job.

I thought all people did office jobs and that Dad just hung out at home all the time with dogs.

4 What is your job now?

For the past eight years I've been a sheep and beef farmer working alongside my mother and father.

Now I'm in partnership with them.

We are a 2800-stock unit farm, predominantly sheep.

We have a 400-hectare hill country farm in Dovedale in the Nelson/Tasman region.

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?

We're facing challenges from a lot of different areas.

However, in challenges there are lots of opportunities.

Hopefully the farming sector continues to embrace change.

We'll continue to become more efficient and adapt to whatever comes our way.

6 What are your future plans?

Continue to proudly be a farmer and extend the legacy of the family.

If I'm lucky enough I would love to pass on our family's connection to the land.

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

I've been lucky enough to be surrounded by people much cleverer than me.

My Mum and Dad are obvious inspirations.

My fiancé's passion for her job also drives me to be the best I can be.

Many of my aunts and uncles have a lot of knowledge in the industry.

More recently I've been trying to pick up as much as I can from friends and other farmers in the region.

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Third-gen farmer urges diversifying

The Farming Fast Five: Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Today we talk to Kimbell sheep and beef farmer, and Mackenzie A&P show president Charlie Waters.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I am a third-generation farmer. Tarapuna was balloted to my grandfather's brother in 1900.

My grandfather took over in 1914 and my father in 1947.

I took over in 1977.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation?

The farm is 303-hectares.

It is mainly sheep and beef, and located in the Kimbell area.

I used to do a bit of cropping for my own use, but being in a higher rainfall area this caused problems.

3 What challenges have you faced in your farming business and how have you tackled these challenges?

Changing from baling hay to baleage means we now have good quality feed for wintering stock.

These last few years we have had very little snow.

In the past we have had very heavy snowfalls which meant we had problems getting to stock.

The change of rules by the govern-

ment and ECan make farming life difficult.

Rising input costs have a significant impact on the profitability of farms.

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

In the early 1980s a local farm water scheme covering six farms was put in.

To achieve this all farmers gave their labour free of charge.

We have all benefitted hugely from this scheme, especially in dry years with assured water supply for stock.

Being a member of local organisations gives me outside contact.

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

Not to rely on one source of income as prices fluctuate on everything, some years being better than others.

We have to take what we get.

Getting off farm talking to others is very important – especially if you are on your own.



Third generation Kimbell farmer and 2025 Mackenzie show president Charlie Waters.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Above – Nick Hamilton is remembered for “throwing himself into everything” and was instrumental in the rebuild of the Omihi Hall in North Canterbury. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Right – Dan Hodgen (left) and Leighton Croft, pictured in front of the new Omihi Hall, say Nick Hamilton had a “go hard or go home” approach to life. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



Hamilton: ‘Never a passenger’

CLAIRE INKSON

2025 marks a decade since the heart of the Omihi district – the historic Glenmark Rugby Clubrooms – was lost to fire.

The clubrooms were a vital community hub and its destruction was deeply felt by a district already grappling with hardship.

The year before, the local pub had also burned down and the community was enduring a relentless drought.

While buildings can be replaced, people cannot, and the district felt another loss keenly in December when Nick “Ham” Hamilton passed away three years after being diagnosed with cancer.

Hamilton was instrumental in the hall’s rebuild, refusing to accept that a replacement would be financially unviable.

“He started a give-a-little page pretty much the day it burned

down,” remembers Omihi farmer and close mate, Leighton Croft.

“If it wasn’t for the money he raised initially, we wouldn’t have a hall here today.”

A study conducted as part of a lotteries grant application had deemed the rebuild unfeasible due to the size of the local population and the hall’s expected use.

“We wouldn’t have met the criteria, but because the community had raised so much money, that made the difference, and Ham was the driving force behind that,” Croft said.

Hamilton’s family had been farming in the district for three generations and his connection to Glenmark Rugby Club was undeniable.

“It was in his blood,” Croft said. “Glenmark was full of All Blacks and the pride that came with that was immense.”

While Hamilton didn’t have the rugby skills of his All Black broth-

er, Scott, his passion for the game was unmatched.

“He had enthusiasm,” Croft said. “You could build a team around that.”

The new Omihi Hall was completed in 2018 and has since been used not just by Glenmark Rugby Club but by the school at which Hamilton had been a pupil, local community groups, weddings, The Rural Support Trust and even fitness classes.

And while the new hall stands as a testament to Hamilton’s passion, it wasn’t the only way he stepped up for his community.

“He threw himself into everything – from the school to the Rural Support Trust, the rebuilding of the Glenmark Church to the tennis club.

“He was a ‘yes’ man.

“When there was something in the community that needed people to contribute to, he would put his hand up,” Croft said.

That extended to supporting fellow farmers when a three-year drought struck the Hurunui district in 2015.

He was an active member of what was then known as the drought committee, but has since been renamed Hurunui Adverse Events.

Hawarden farmer and drought committee member Dan Hodgen remembers Hamilton as “never being a passenger” when it came to helping out and was “donkey deep” in everything he did.

“He wasn’t one of those people who would just sit back and do the grunt work.

“He was always organising; he was an asset for adverse events.

“I don’t know how he fit it all in, to be fair.”

Hodgen remembers a phone call from Hamilton in 2016 when he pitched an ambitious idea for the committee.

“He said, ‘Why don’t we take a

hundred farmers to Field Days?’

“And I thought, you are bloody nuts – how the hell do we put that together?”

Up until that point, the drought committee had focused on smaller events, like community barbecues.

But Hamilton saw the potential for a larger, morale-boosting initiative – taking farmers to Mystery Creek in Hamilton.

Despite the logistical and financial challenges, Hamilton was unwavering.

“You couldn’t say no to him,” Hodgen said.

“Between the two of us, we raised \$60,000 in two days.

“He put it all together and drove the project from start to finish.

“That was Ham – go big or go home.”

Nick Hamilton was farewelled with a celebration of his life at the Omihi Hall on December 13, 2024.

He was 50 years old.

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Matt and Heidi Hart of Pye Group, Longlane Farm in Rakaia

Canterbury arable farmers Matt and Heidi Hart are redefining sustainable agriculture through their dedication to innovative farm practices and a deep commitment to soil health.

The 890ha (830ha effective) Longlane Farm is owned by Leighton and Michelle Pye, with its management taken over by Matt in 2003. Since then, he has prioritised soil health and transformed the mixed cropping and lamb finishing operation. This includes significantly improving crop yields and quality while reducing the farm's environmental impact.

About 25% of Longlane's sown area is dedicated to vegetable production, with the balance used to grow cereal and ryegrass. The main crops are potatoes, juicing carrots, wheat, barley, ryegrass and peas.

Key to Matt and Heidi's success is a meticulous approach to data-driven decision-making. They use advanced technologies including soil moisture probes and variable rate fertilisation to tailor inputs to specific land conditions – optimising the use of resources and minimising waste.

The judges were particularly impressed by the couple's willingness to experiment with new ideas. One example is the introduction of nature strips as an effective way of naturally controlling pests – ultimately reducing the farm's reliance on chemical pesticides.

By incorporating cover crops and minimising tillage, they have also improved the property's soil structure, increased organic matter, and enhanced water retention.

The Hart's have a strong commitment to staff wellbeing, with policies implemented to manage fatigue, promote safety, and foster a positive work culture. By investing in training and development, Matt and Heidi empower their team to contribute to the farm's ongoing success.

External experts are regularly used to objectively provide advice on the farm's strategy and performance. This, combined with the innovative approaches being employed, are boosting the farm's production while also contributing to a more resilient and environmentally friendly agricultural sector.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID:

The importance of people is clearly evident in the Harts' business, highlighted by exceptional staff retention and a strong focus on team culture to drive engagement.

Matt and Heidi have established robust systems and processes for employee development, including



regular performance reviews, effective fatigue management policies, and a strong emphasis on wellbeing and work-life balance.

The Harts demonstrate a strong commitment to their people with the implementation of a fatigue and wellbeing policy to support staff in a busy business.



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From farm to frontline

CLAIRE INKSON

In 1941, with the world already weary from a war that was supposed to end by Christmas of 1939 but showed no clear end in sight, a farmer from Ashburton enlisted for military service.

Arthur Noal Wilson, a “tough, wiry little fellow” who was known by his middle name, will be featured in the “Land, Sea and Air Exhibition” at the Ashburton Museum, opening on March 15.

The exhibition highlights the experiences of four Mid Canterbury individuals who made significant contributions to the war effort and left behind a legacy of bravery and resilience.

Elaine Bishop, Noal’s 82-year-old niece who still calls Mid Canterbury home, believes the rigours of farm life would have prepared Wilson well for the challenges of war.

“They were brought up tough because times were hard,” she said.

Elaine recalls stories her father, Noal’s brother, told about their childhood on the farm in Willowby.

“My father spent a week out in a tent driving a horse and team when he was 15, with only a cold leg of mutton to eat.”

It was a typical Mid Canterbury upbringing.

Noal was born on Christmas Day in 1907, earning his festive (though unusually spelled) middle name.

He attended Wakanui School before moving on to Ashburton Technical School for high school.

A passionate sportsman, he later played rugby for the Wakanui Rov-



Left – Ashburton farmer turned motorcycle dispatch rider Arthur Noal Wilson on his motorbike.

PHOTOS ASHBURTON MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION

ers and even participated in a men’s hockey match against a visiting Indian team in 1938.

Noals agricultural career began as a farm labourer for the Hamptons on Maronan Rd before he married Vera Clement in 1931.

Vera had been previously engaged to another man, but the relationship ended when she took custody of her niece, Joan Belcher after her sister Lillian passed away in 1922.

“Vera would have been the only

mother Joan knew, and Aunt Vera would have promised her sister she would look after her,” Elaine explained.

Together, Noal and Vera raised Joan on their farm in Laghmore, where they ran a small herd of dairy cows.

“They were a good unit, the three of them,” said Elaine.

However, the couple suffered a heartbreaking loss when their baby boy, Ronald, died just a week after

birth in August 1932.

Despite this tragedy, there were happier times as well.

Noal was passionate about racehorses and enjoyed socialising with friends over a drink. “He liked to smoke, and he liked to drink, he was quite sociable in his own way,” Elaine recalled.

Then, in 1941, the call to duty came.

After training as an infantryman at Burnham Military Camp, Noal

was dispatched to Egypt in April onboard the SS Mauretania from Wellington with the 5th reinforcements.

He became a motorcycle dispatch rider, delivering messages and orders through dangerous terrains on a Matchless G3/L four-speed.

Noal’s lithe frame suited him for a job requiring quick reflexes and agility.

“He was wiry; there wasn’t much of him,” Elaine noted.

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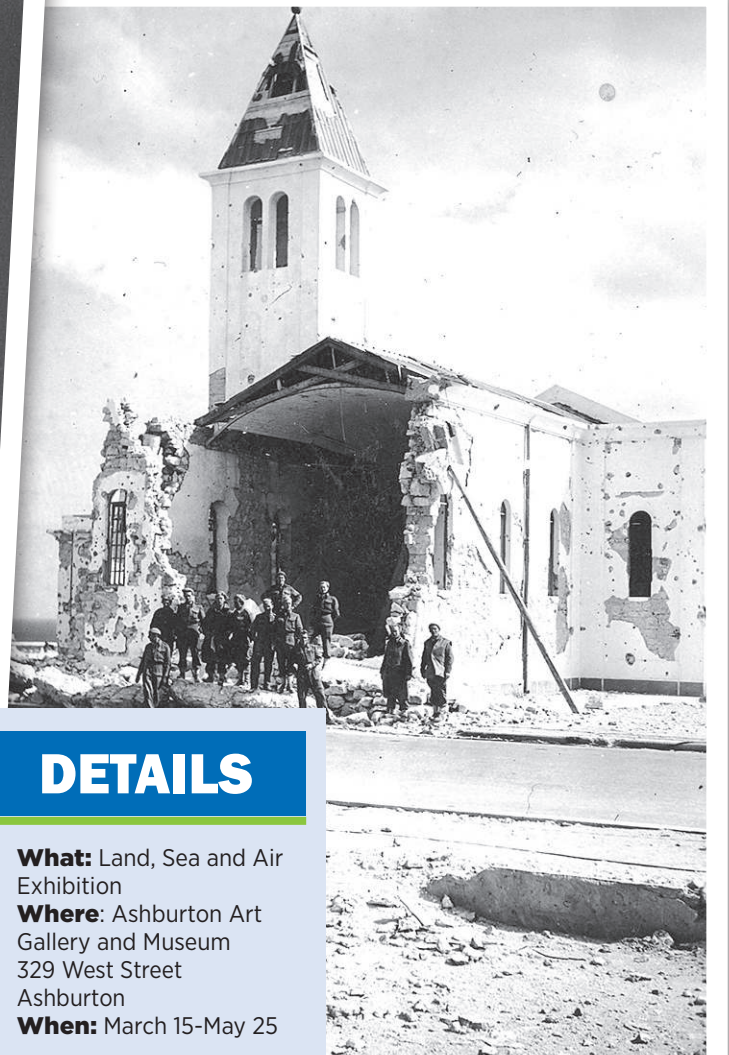
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Above – New Zealand Forces Club Christmas party in Florence, Italy.



Above – Studio portrait of Arthur Noal Wilson in uniform taken during World War Two.
Right – Soldiers outside a destroyed church in Bardiyah or El Burdi, Libya.



DETAILS

- **What:** Land, Sea and Air Exhibition
- **Where:** Ashburton Art Gallery and Museum 329 West Street Ashburton
- **When:** March 15-May 25

Noal's duties took him from Egypt to Italy, and then the Middle East before finally returning to New Zealand in September 1945. He was released from service that December.

Noal kept a record of his experiences through photographs, which became a valuable album documenting the war through his eyes.

Elaine later donated this album to the museum, where it will be a key feature of the exhibition.

"I came across the album and thought, I need to do something with this because my children won't

thank me for leaving them any more stuff," Elaine said.

The photographs offer a glimpse into the chaos and destruction of war—images of ruined buildings, battle scenes, destroyed vehicles, and prisoners of war.

While Noal rarely spoke of his experiences, Elaine remembers him recounting a story of rescuing two nuns sheltering under a bridge from enemy fire.

He also shared a more humorous incident.

"He wasn't a very communicative guy, but I remember a story where

he was climbing a glasshouse in Italy, and he fell through and broke his nose," Elaine said.

Although the war must have been harrowing for Noal, she believes his experience was somewhat less intense than that of others.

"Being a dispatch rider, he had a great time in the war, if you can say that.

"He wasn't actively fighting as such."

Nevertheless, returning to civilian life in New Zealand in 1945 posed its own set of challenges.

"They had to come back, absorb a

lot, and get on with life. It was pretty tough," Elaine reflected.

Having moved to farm in Reefton, Noal, Vera and Joan then moved to Cust in North Canterbury in 1969.

It was here that Vera died three years later at age 82.

Noal, who had been younger than Vera, died in 1981 age 74 and was

buried in Rangiora.

Elaine is glad that, decades later, people are recognising the sacrifices made by individuals like Noal and sharing their stories.

"It's nice that people are doing these things now. After the war, nothing was said for such a long time."

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Evidence-based Conservation

Written by Emma Warmerdam, Field Technician for Verity NZ based in Methven.

Verity NZ believes landowners should be financially rewarded for their contributions to mitigating the climate crisis and protecting our native flora and fauna. We can achieve this by registering nature-based reforestation and revegetation projects in the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM). The NZ Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) may also be used in certain cases. Landowners who create a carbon project with Verity NZ can earn money off marginal farmland that was previously returning very little income. We use nature-based solutions to restore NZ's native biodiversity.

Black Hill Station Carbon Project

In 2024 Verity NZ established a carbon project on Black Hill Station, Mid Canterbury using the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM). The main objectives of this carbon project are:

- Carbon sequestration through facilitating the growth of native tree species by changing land management practices, fencing, planting and seeding. This will increase the capacity of natural systems to capture and store carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere.
- Encouraging and supporting sustainable practices that contribute to long-term climate resilience and positive outcomes for freshwater and biodiversity.

The project implementation phase is expected to occur over three years, and the lifetime of the carbon project is 60 years. Over this timeframe, the following carbon pools will be measured:

- Aboveground tree biomass
- Belowground tree biomass
- Soil organic carbon

The estimated annual greenhouse gas removals from the 1,146-hectare project area is 11,223 tCO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) per year. This totals 673,530 tCO₂e over the 60-year lifespan of the project. Verity NZ has projects on the ground sequestering carbon through native regeneration and we are looking for more landowners across New Zealand to partner with us.

Black Hill Station Pilot Plots

An integral part of this carbon project is gathering data on what project activities work best for regenerating our high-country land. To study this, 19 pilot plots were established throughout Black Hill Station in 2024. This is in addition to the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) required for carbon projects in the VCM. This research is an important part of Verity NZ's evidence-based approach, as we value integrity, consistency and transparency. We will monitor the plots for 60 years, visiting them each spring and autumn to measure and assess the condition of the plants in each plot.

These plots will provide valuable data and insights for future Verity NZ projects in Canterbury and other regions of New Zealand. It will indicate what activities (or combination of activities) lead to the successful regeneration of native species across various elevations and aspects.

The elevations of our 19 plots range from 398m to 1,321m (the modelled historical bush line in this locality), with a range of aspects. Elevation, along with exposure to prevailing winds, rainfall and sunlight hours all affect native vegetation growth.



Plot 5 at 1,032m with a northerly aspect

The areas around each of the plots will serve as control sites, allowing us to observe the differences between passive natural regeneration and assisted natural regeneration. In some of these areas, light grazing is permitted to understand the potential benefits of animals opening up the sward and working seed into the ground. We are trialling methods that may allow more landowners to pursue profitable native regeneration projects without the need for complete stock exclusion and disruption to current practices.

Our Project Activities for the Study

Fencing

Each plot contains a fenced area. These areas have been fenced with seven wires to keep sheep and cattle out. Plots at lower elevations have an additional top barbed wire added to prevent cattle from pushing in, as these areas have more grazing pressure than those at higher elevations.



Plot 12 at 764m with an easterly aspect

Planting

Native seedlings (kānuka, mānuka, tōtara, kōhūhū/black matipo and black beech) were sourced from a local nursery. Most of this seed had been eco-sourced from Mid Canterbury. All seedlings were planted approximately two meters apart, with a mixture of the five species. Two fertiliser pellets were placed in each hole before planting. Plant guards and biodegradable weed mats have been used to protect the plants during establishment. Around 50 plants were planted inside the fenced area while another 50 plants were planted outside the fenced area. This will enable us to monitor the differences between areas with intermittent grazing versus the more traditional approach of stock exclusion.

Progressive Planting

Verity NZ is trialling a progressive planting regime in several of the plots. The plots were planted with sub-climax and climax species. The trial results will demonstrate whether we can go straight to re-establishing climax species in

various elevation and aspect settings, or whether certain areas need the sub-climax establishment phase to support climax species establishment. The diagram shows the pattern of secondary succession possible on high country land.

Aerial Seeding

Verity NZ will trial our seeding technology in several plots, using both hand seeding and aerial seeding via our drone. This will be done in autumn to maximise rainfall for successful seed establishment.

Intermittent Grazing

After aerial seeding, several plots will have sheep returned for short periods to assist seed establishment through the 'hoof and tooth' method. Verity NZ is willing to challenge conventional beliefs about the negative impacts of livestock in certain circumstances. We believe that livestock used in certain situations can have positive impacts on regeneration projects.

How will this research benefit you?

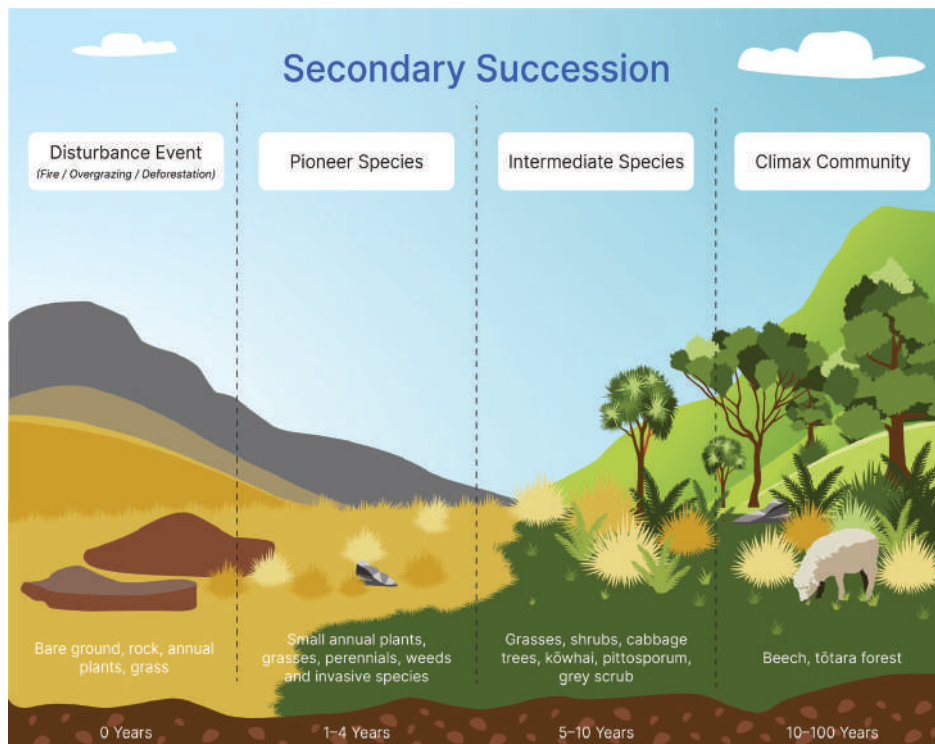
The data collected throughout this pilot study will mean Verity NZ can make sure our project activities are used in the right place, at the right time, enabling faster and more successful native regeneration on your land. It will allow us to know when introducing intermittent grazing is appropriate and the best time to start aerial seeding and introducing climax species. By collecting measurements (tree height and stem diameter) of the native plants growing in each plot we will also be able to fine-tune our estimates of the CO₂ that your regenerating land can store, adjusting for factors such as elevation, aspect, exposure, temperature and rainfall.

Give us a call!

Get in touch with our team in Methven for further information. The Voluntary Carbon Market is the perfect solution for farmers who want to implement native restoration and planting projects to increase biodiversity, leave behind a positive legacy and steward the land for the future. We can discuss your goals for native regeneration and conservation, how we assess your land for eligibility and how Verity NZ funds the project from conception to completion. Verity NZ is the genuine one-stop-shop, seed-to-credit company who will deliver for you.

.....

Verity NZ are proud to present our conservation for profit model. Helping farmers earn income through the Voluntary Carbon Market for native restoration and other sequestration projects.



Rock of ages ...

PHILL EVEREST

Did you realise the Rangitata River used to flow through the Ashburton Gorge? What a fascinating and informative day we had recently with James Shulmeister, a professor at Canterbury University and a geomorphologist.

What a title, but he has made it a lifetime study (with the assistance of some of his students) to study the glacial action in the Ashburton Lakes area from almost 30,000 years ago.

The main Rangitata glacier came through from Mt Potts, over Camp and Clearwater to the Ashburton Gorge.

From the markings on the hillsides James estimated the glacial ice was 250-300m deep 26-27,000 years ago.

How do the geomorphologists know this? They age the rocks that sat on top of the glacier, as we see on the Tasman and Hooker glaciers.

From samples of large rocks exposed to solar radiation and below ground that were not exposed to the radiation, they can determine the age of the deposit.

All the lakes in the Ashburton lakes area are either kettle holes (eg Māori lakes) or lakes formed at the terminus of the glacier (eg Lake Heron).

The distance between many of the moraines in the Ashburton Lakes has been estimated at 2000 years.

When the Rangitata was flowing out of the Ashburton Gorge at Blowing Point, the river would have been close to the size of the Waimakariri River.

This helps to explain some of the development of our district.

The gravels deposited at Mt Potts cutting on the way through from Lake Camp/Clearwater are over 100m thick demonstrating the huge volume of gravels those glaciers shifted, both in front of and on top of the glaciers.

James has analysed silt cores taken from the bottom of Lake Emma from 8000 years ago. The samples show the level of nutrification in the lakes has varied over time and is highly likely the levels were higher than they are today.

What caused this? What was the original vegetation?

Not all of these questions can be answered but pollen analysis from silt cores from the lakes has indicated before New Zealand was settled mountain totara and matai may have covered the valley floor, with silver beech on the hills and celery pine and bog pine may have covered the higher areas.

Why is this information important?

The members of the Otuwharekai Ashburton Lakes Catchment Group are trying to understand what is happening in their catchment that many of us use for recreation.

James' discussion with the group has highlighted why in some areas of the catchment we have very shallow soils with bedrock close and others are wind-blown loess over 100m of gravel.

As a group we have been sampling water over 45 sites each month with a range in nitrate results generally between less than 0.02 up to 1.613 parts per million (ppm).

To provide context here the group tested bottled drinking water at 0.8ppm/N and snow from the Labour weekend snow fall at 0.19ppm/N.

We get the odd sample over 1ppm which is from springs, and this is why we had James Shulmeister come to speak to the catchment group.

We need to understand where the spring water is coming from to help us understand if we can have any impact on these higher concentrations.

Phill Everest is the Ashburton Lakes Catchment Group facilitator



Professor James Shulmeister educated the group about the glacial history of their catchment. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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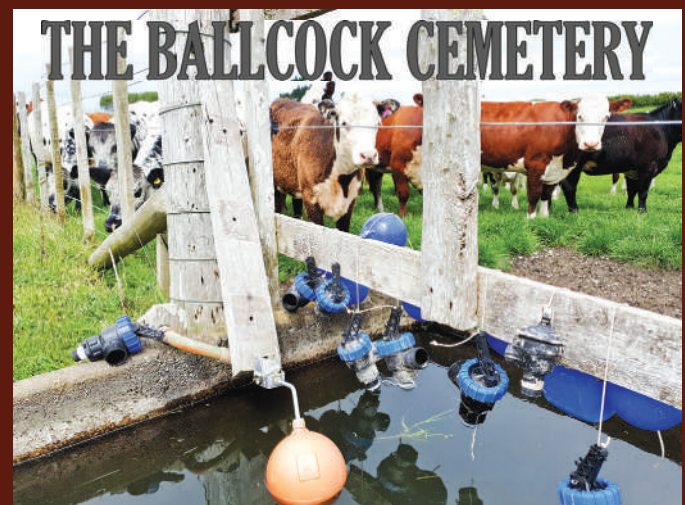
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From the author: The woman telli

ANISHA SATYA

Picture books, research reports, magazines and detailed historical records. Books, everywhere.

Upon entering Angela Cushnie's office, it's obvious she has an affinity for words and writing.

"My first job, out of school, was actually at the Ashburton Guardian," she said.

"I was a typesetter, back in the day."

Cushnie has spent most of her life telling the stories that have shaped the Mid Canterbury landscape, from our farmers to our wetlands and water usage.

Farmers know her as the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective's co-ordinator, overseeing the funding, resourcing and communications between the nine different catchment groups in the region.

But walking the line between rural and conservation storytelling was never her dream job.

Like any kid from Hinds, Cushnie grew up surrounded by agriculture.

"As kids, most of our jobs were in the shearing shed or rouging, that sort of stuff."

She said she didn't enjoy school much, but left unsure of what to do.

After travelling for a while, her storytelling career began in 1999, where she created PR company Country Copy Communications.

"Farmers talk farming, and they assume we know what they're talking about."

"Me being naturally curious, but not afraid to ask silly questions – I'd say 'you just tell me,' and things evolved from there."

After kickstarting the business, working for big names like Anzsco, she became an editor for Latitude Magazine.

At this point, Cushnie had become good at writing small features, but a new venture was ahead – writing a book.

"In 2015, I got approached to co-write Water, Farming and Families."

It's a time capsule of a book and details the history of the Mayfield-Hinds irrigation scheme, now the Mayfield-Hinds-Valetta scheme or MHV, which was near 80 years old at the time.

"The [motivation] behind writing the book was many of the people who'd been instrumental in the early days of the scheme were getting older and their memories were fading."

"So we said, 'how do we document and capture this?'"

Her and fellow author Anita Body split the workload in half, with Cushnie assigned to tackle the pioneering era and the foundations of the scheme.

Writing about irrigation might not sound particularly fun, but Cushnie's curiosity grew the more she unearthed.

"As someone from Hinds, the Rangitata Diversion Race (RDR) and irrigation has always been there. We take it for granted, I suppose."

Digging through old records and meeting people through interviews felt like sifting for gold; she began to understand the mahi that had gone into setting up the scheme.

"I got to go back through all of the minutes. You see how influences like war, politics, food shortages, affected



Above – Angela Cushnie shoots photos out on a Ruapuna farm.
Right – Writer and photographer Angela Cushnie.

PHOTO ANISHA SATYA

it; how every decade and generation has gone through challenging times.

"The admiration I have for those people that sacrificed time away from farm and family for their community, for their district, for future generations, is huge."

Interest piqued, in 2016 she wanted

to "find out more about what was happening with our water – quality and quantity," so applied to join the Ashburton Water Zone Committee.

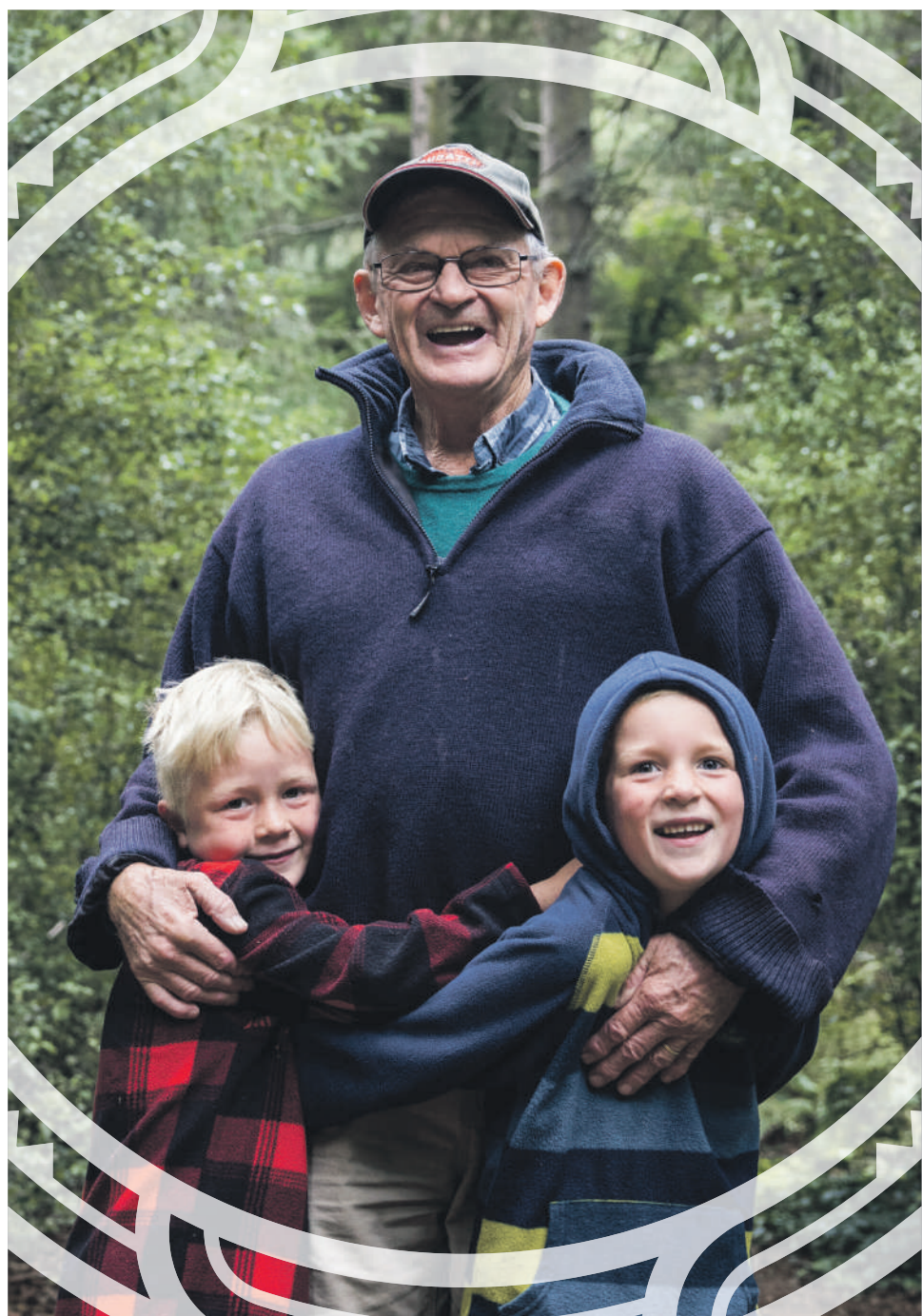
She was unsuccessful, but got in the next year – persistence pays off.

"You're sitting at a table, having discussions about really important

topics that you can question, and do a deep dive into, and research."

"That was such a rewarding process."

Through that, she met runanga representative Peter Ramsden, who introduced her to water through a te ao Māori lens. "I asked if I could



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ng Mid Canterbury's rural stories



an opportunity to learn."

She founded the Kanuka Mid Canterbury Regeneration in 2018 to educate kids on the native flora and fauna that call our district home.

"Before it started, though, I had to do a whole lot of research, ask questions, and go down a whole lot of rabbit holes to find out what was actually here."

Nowadays, the trust's educational efforts are in full swing: students get to learn about their environmental footprint, explore what's in the rivers and lands nearby, and learn local history when the trust comes over for a class or two.

"That's been rolling along, and it gets good funding, whether its support from Advance Ashburton or others."

While educating the next generation is important, getting current landowners up to spend was vital to kickstarting the korero around conservation.

"When you look at zone implementation programmes, and all these plans and recommendations, it can feel like 'how are we supposed to actually do all of this?'"

Farmers, especially those in Mid Canterbury, know the importance of protecting the land – it's their income and their future.

"If you had a chance to talk to different [farmers], most of them would walk towards the discussion.

"Others are keen, but don't know where to start. Trying to have those discussions one-on-one, it takes so

much time, so that's where the catchment group came into it."

The Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective, MCCC, oversees the nine different catchment groups in our area.

"In 2018, we started unofficially pulling the concept together.

"And in 2021, just after the May floods, we had a meeting in the southern rugby clubs.

"We had over 60 people come along; that gave us a good indication that there was certainly interest."

Farmer Duncan Barr, now the MCCC chairperson, and Cushnie formed the project, which has made it easier for the nine groups to garner funding.

It's also been a means for connection building and sharing ideas, with collaborations run with Beef + Lamb, RuralCo and more.

Oh, and amongst all this, Cushnie wrote a book of her own in 2020.

After a forage through the books stacked on her desks and in her drawers, Cushnie pulls out a striking illustrated picture book: *A Change is Gonna Come*.

The story captures the conservation work Mid Canterbury farmers do, but beyond that, it tells her story.

"Inspiration for this story comes from a lifetime of living and working in Rural New Zealand," Cushnie reads from the first page.

"Several years ago I focused my career on projects which would connect land and water, cultures and communities to shape a future we can all be proud of."

She quickly flicks through the pages, perhaps reflecting on how far

local conservation has come in the five years since she'd written it.

"We wrote this book before we started the catchment group; this was the vision."

"Seeing it come to fruition ... if you said, five years ago, it was going to get where it has, I wouldn't have expected it."

Her career has been an environmental rollercoaster – will the ride ever end?

"Ultimately, the goal is to tell a really powerful story about the district, all of the things that are going on.

"One that says 'we acknowledge the impact that industry and agriculture has on the environment, but we also understand the importance of the economic and social component our land provides for the district."

"The legacy we leave through the leadership we show is going to, hopefully, one we can look back on and be proud of."

Cushnie's starting to plan for the future now – with three grandchildren to devote her time to, she wants more of a work-life balance.

"I do find the water and environmental discussion is highly emotive, very political. I don't enjoy that side of it so much.

"I'm here for the community, and doing things."

"I just [want to] make sure there's someone there who gets the community bit and the bigger picture.

There's one thing she's certain of (though, as a storyteller myself, who's just learning the ropes, I quietly hope she'll change her mind).

"I'm certainly not going to write anymore books!"

interview him for a story for Latitude, it was called, 'We are water, and water is us'.

"He opened up about why water is important to Māori, that was fascinating."

So far, Cushnie had gone from farming, to irrigation, to wider con-

versations about water.

Her next venture was into unfamiliar territory: biodiversity.

"I went to Hinds School, nobody really talked about biodiversity, you didn't have that playspace for learning and didn't learn the history of the district. "So I wanted to give children



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Half a century and still trucking on



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

It all started with one truck and a farming dream.

Philip Wareing is a local legend in Mid Canterbury, known for turning a small trucking venture into one of the largest rural transport companies on the South Island.

In 1975, Wareing was working as a field rep for Pyne Gould Guinness when an opportunity arose to buy a small spraying business.

With determination and a clear goal in mind, he set to work.

"The goal was always to go farming," Wareing said.

While the average spraying contractor handled around 10,000 acres a year, Wareing exceeded expectations.

"I did 13,000 acres in my first year and 17,000 acres the following year," he said.

"A lot of people in the industry said it couldn't be done, but I did it. I worked all the daylight hours."

After two years, he added another truck, custom-built by Paul Connell, who became his first employee.

In 1981, the business expanded into fertiliser spreading when Wareing purchased Methven Fertiliser and Staveley Lime Company.

Over the next four decades, Wareing's business flourished. He acquired around seven smaller companies, including Cochranes Logging in 1986, Rural Transport in 2004 and Mayfield Transport in 2023.

Today, the Wareing Group consists of five subsidiaries, boasts a fleet of 250 trucks, and employs 317 people — many of whom, like Paul Connell, have been with the company for decades.

Looking back, Wareing says he never expected the business to grow as it did.

"I never envisaged it," he said.

"The goal was always to buy a

"At one point, we had 30 trucks, and the rule of thumb is to buy three a year.

"But with the recession, all I could afford was a ride-on lawnmower.

"I got more enjoyment out of that than buying a truck."

After a challenging year of no truck purchases, Wareing had to buy double the following year, but when the recession ended, the business was back on track.

Despite the risks and setbacks over the years, Wareing thrives on the challenges.

"I don't worry too much when it comes to big decisions," he said.

“

... But with the recession, all I could afford was a ride-on lawnmower. I got more enjoyment out of that than buying a truck

farm."

In 1997, that dream was realised when he purchased Mt Arrowsmith Station, a 9000-hectare property nestled between the Arrowsmith Range and Lake Heron.

It remains one of his most cherished places.

"I love it. It doesn't take much to get me up there."

Now, as the company celebrates 50 years in business this July, Wareing reflects on the challenges he's faced.

Among the toughest was navigating through several recessions.

"You do get a bit more hesitant as you get older, though."

What Wareing is most proud of is seeing his children join the business.

"My two sons have been with the company for a long time and my daughter joined five years ago. I'm very proud of that."

He adds that without their involvement, he wouldn't have had the same drive.

"I've built it up, so they have something worthwhile."

For Wareing, the key to success is simple: "Just be honest."



Philip Wareing with the Mercedes spraying truck painted gold to commemorate 50 years in business on display at the Methven show on March 15.

PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

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It's time for a lame-cow hunt

SONJA COOMBES

At our veterinary clinic in Dunsandel, we have helped a lot of dairy cows with lameness issues over the years.

This season's been no different.

While the summer rainfall has been good for the irrigation bills, it's been a pain for hooves and tracks.

Now, as we are heading into late lactation, it's especially important to make sure that lame cows are found early and treated effectively.

This is on top of the usual reasons, such as making the cow more comfortable, maintaining feed intake and supporting production and body condition.

It's crucial for them to recover in time before being trucked or walked to their wintering paddocks.

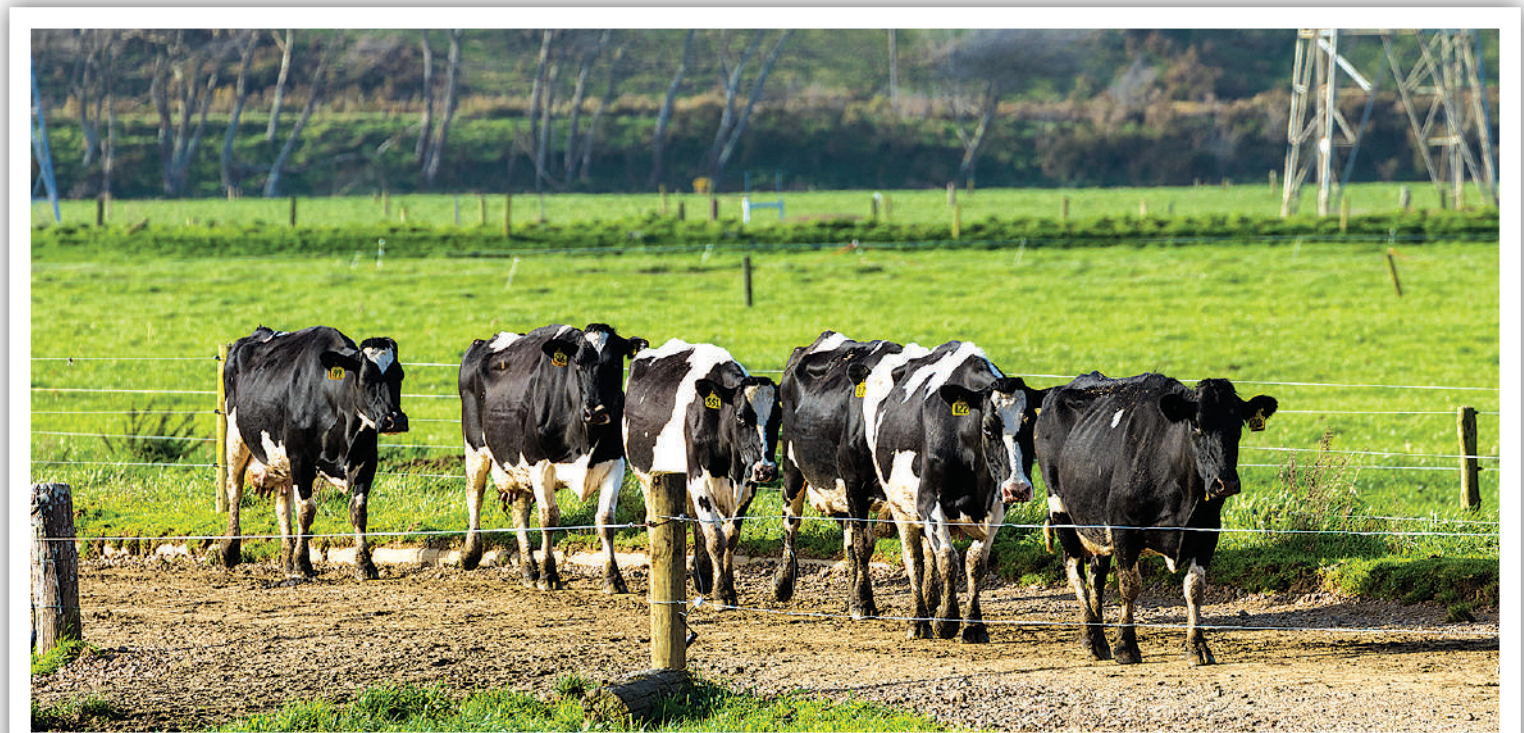
Cows that aren't sound enough to be trucked or walk will then have to stay at the home farm as they complete their recovery.

Besides, no one wants to have to deal with a lame cow at grazing, where facilities are often not as user-friendly as at the home farm.

It's a bit like us getting ready to go on our winter holiday and getting those niggles seen to by our doctor before we travel somewhere far away.

Finding lame cows can be a challenge. Not all of them hang round at the back of the herd. Being a prey animal, they are very good at hiding when they are sore.

A regular herd lameness scoring can be helpful to find those stoic creatures (it's more of a lame cow



hunt really).

You hide yourself along the track leading from the shed to the paddock and spy on them with binoculars, noting down any tag numbers you see limping.

We provide this service to our clients, as many other vet clinics do too.

Once you have a lame cow drafted for closer inspection, remember to do a quick visual check of the upper leg and shoulder/pelvis.

Though it is rare, sometimes cows do break or dislocate their leg and

you need to call a vet immediately if you suspect anything like that.

If it looks like the foot is the only problem area, then it's best to treat her within 24 hours of seeing her lame.

This is to prevent the infection from travelling further and getting to crucial structures of the hoof claw.

For example, if the tissue responsible for new growth gets damaged, then she may develop a chronic weak spot there and be prone to more problems in future.

Also, if bacteria reach the deeper structures (like bones and tendons), then they can hide themselves from the immune system and be hard to cure.

When we talk about effective lame cow treatment, that includes the following essentials: trimming the soles to find and correct issues, using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory pain relief during recovery, and reducing the pressure on the affected claws by limiting walking and using a hoof block on the healthy claw (if there is a healthy

one).

Antibiotics should only be used according to your veterinarian's authorisation.

Lame cows identified early and treated effectively should show signs of improvement after three days. If not, call your vet out for assistance.

If you have any questions about lameness in cattle, contact your local veterinarian.

Sonja Coombes (BVSc) is with Selwyn Rakaia Vets

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Rat control: The science. (And the cunning tricks.)

An expert shares his secrets to success

Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Ltd Regional Manager Upper North Island, is an expert on rodent control. And he practices what he preaches.

His own backyard has aviaries, a chook house, and a compost heap – all very attractive to rats. Plus, there's a dairy farm adjacent. That puts him in a great position to share his personal experience, along with the hard science and data.

Pieter says the choice of bait is important, but he warns not to be taken in by some baits' claims of palatability. "Those baits are generally only trialled on little, white lab rats. Feral rats behave quite differently. A feral rat-based, reality approach to research and testing is unique to Generation® Soft Bait."

He says De Sangosse, the company which produces Generation Soft Bait – here comes the Pied Piper bit – has a long partnership with the Vet School of Lyon, where feral rats caught in the wild are kept in a large/free range environment. These rats are then used for their trials. "As a result, they came up with a bait that is more tempting – but only to the target pest. There is nothing else like it in the market."

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

Generation Soft Bait is the most advanced anti-coagulant on the market, using difethialone 25 ppm as its active,



Rats are serious pests and can cause significant damage. Generation Soft Baits provide powerful control.

which rodents can't detect. There is no known genetic resistance among rodent populations.

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. A rat's average daily dietary intake is 20 g/day. For a mouse it's about 3 g/day. In contrast, their output is prolific – one rat can produce 50 droppings, and 50 mL of urine a day.

The bait 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 which reduces the risk of consumption by non-target animals (primary poisoning). It is strongly advised to discard of any dead rat carcasses to reduce the risk of secondary poisoning.

Pieter says he recommends and uses Generation Soft Bait with complete

confidence. "There have been absolutely no safety issues with the product here or anywhere."

In terms of a programme for rat control, Pieter says following the product instruction label is vital. Positioning bait stations needs to be tactical, and according to risk and rat population. He uses five bait stations on his property, each strategically located. Importantly, he says, it's not just a matter of filling bait stations and walking away – if you want the job done right. "There's a science to it."

"The attractiveness of Generation Soft Bait is vital and, because its effects are delayed a bit, once the dominant rats have fed, other rats gain confidence and follow their lead. But, if you don't keep monitoring and keep the bait stations topped-up, the bait stations run empty before all the rats have consumed a lethal dose. The remaining rats will look for alternative food sources and may not visit the bait station next time you fill it up. If you don't have that robust system in place, you're effectively teaching them not to eat the bait."

"And, definitely don't be shy when you top up the bait. You need a good supply. I check bait stations every day for the first 5 days and top up whatever bait has been eaten."

Pieter says it could be that by day 4 of monitoring you'll be noticing the impact. "Usually by day 6, you'll have dealt with that particular population."

He warns it's not just grains and food waste rats are after. He says dog biscuits are particularly attractive to the pests, and automatic dog feeders can contribute to rapid rat population build-up. "Dog biscuits are high protein and high energy.

Feeding on them leads to female rats producing, and being able to feed, larger litters."

Among the most serious mammalian pests known to man, rats are destructive, dirty, and disease-carrying.

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 the smaller of the three.

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 and lets it go and it ends up, half-dead under the kitchen dresser. "Not ideal."

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, transfer of diseases and posing a threat to chickens, native birds, and other fauna.

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."

Generation Soft Bait, and the bait stations are available exclusively from PGG Wrightson. For more information visit your local PGG Wrightson store or contact Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Regional Manager Upper North Island at 021 392 740.

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SIDE changes with farmers in mind

The South Island Dairy Event (SIDE) is making a comeback – with a new time and location designed to make it more convenient for farmers to attend.

After being held in Lincoln last year, this year's event will take place in Timaru, offering easier access for farmers in Mid and South Canterbury.

In a shift from its traditional winter schedule, SIDE will now be held in autumn, from April 7–9, to avoid overlapping with the busy on-farm season.

With the event's new location and timing, 2025 SIDE co-chairperson Abby Rawcliffe is encouraging farmers to take advantage of the opportunity.

"It's right on their doorstep. Even if they can only attend for one day, it's better than nothing."

"It's a chance to take a break from farm life, broaden their knowledge, and expand their networks."

The three-day conference is the largest of its kind in New Zealand, designed by farmers for farmers, and features a range of keynote speakers, networking opportunities, and workshops with industry experts, including farmers, researchers, consultants, and accountants.

Independent economist Cameron Bagrie returns to this year's event, speaking at the SIDE breakfast on the last day of the conference.

"Cameron is really good at keeping us up to date with what's going on and how he thinks markets are going to perform."



DETAILS

- **When:**
Field trip: Monday, April 7
Conference: Tuesday, April 8, & Wednesday, April 9
- **Where:** Southern Trust Events Centre, Timaru
- **Registration and ticket sales:** <https://www.side.org.nz/Event-Details/Registration>

2025 SIDE co-chairperson Abby Rawcliffe (left) with co-chairperson Myfanwy Alexander hope the change in time and location will see a record attendance at the event.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

Other keynote speakers include Olympic Rower Emma Twigg, military veteran and leadership specialist Dr Ellen Ford and podcaster and dairy farmer Sam Owen.

Jamie McKay, host of The Country radio programme, will MC the event.

Rawcliffe said this year's event has a strong focus on science innovation and agri-tech.

"We had the idea that we could do a sort of speed dating session on the new science and innovation happening."

Rawcliffe said it provides an

opportunity to show farmers where their DairyNZ levy money is being spent.

"We pay our levies and we often don't know what our levies are going toward and what research and development is going on out there."

Rawcliffe said it gives research-

ers and scientists the chance to showcase what they are doing and farmers the chance to question it and see if it would be practical on-farm.

"We thought we would do little snippets of each thing, and then farmers have the opportunity to network with presenters afterwards."

BrightSIDE, a conference segment aimed at people entering or new to the dairy industry, is making a comeback this year, running alongside the main event.

BrightSIDE attendees will listen to keynote speaker Emma Twigg before attending practical workshops.

"It's about hands-on experience and putting them in front of industry professionals."

"It's very focused on opportunities within the industry and keeping people in the sector."

In what Rawcliffe describes as an "exciting opportunity", SIDE will be offering a \$3000 scholarship to a recipient who attended this year's conference or has attended in the past.

"They can put that money towards doing a university course or industry training to further their development."

Rawcliffe said that every aspect of this year's SIDE event focuses on how to achieve a 1% gain in all aspects of your farming business, with small wins leading to overall success.

"Farmers can learn about those gains, take them home and action them in their business, and that develops the industry."

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Tiny bubbles with big results



Nanobubble Agritech founder and chief executive Leon Power.

PHOTO SUPPLIED



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR

In the face of increasing droughts and water scarcity, dairy farmers are turning to innovative solutions to keep their farms productive.

Enter Nanobubble technology — a potential game-changer that could transform irrigation systems, boost pasture growth and help farmers use water more efficiently while ensuring healthier soils and stronger crops.

Align Farms in Ashburton are three years into a trial of Nanobubble Agritech, with one centre pivot utilising the technology.

"We got involved quite early on because we felt that someone needed to give it a punt," Align Farms chief executive Rhys Roberts said.

"The number one driver of on-farm profitability is maximising home-grown feed, so if there is any technology we can utilise to grow more home-grown feed and feed less supplement, I'm supportive of that."

Nanobubble uses microscopic oxygen bubbles that stay suspended in water for longer, delivering a constant supply of dissolved oxygen to the soil.

The increased oxygenation to the plant's root zone has shown stronger root systems, improved soil structure, and improved pasture resili-



ience to heat and stress.

The technology uses mobile drip lines, which can be retrofitted to existing systems, delivering bubbles close to the soil with the added benefit of less evaporation than traditional irrigation systems.

"If we apply 15mm of normal irrigation, you come back, and the base of the soil is visibly dry until that pivot comes back around again," Roberts said.

"Whereas with Nanobubble, we return a day later, and the soil is

visibly moist."

Tests done in conjunction with Massey University showed that Nanobubble Agritech systems helped use water much more efficiently.

In the trials, fields watered with oxygen nanobubbles produced better results, even with less water, compared to fields using regular irrigation with plenty of water.

"Some of the data that came out of the Massey trial looked quite promising."

Roberts said there had been a few

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Above – The Nanobubble system is being used over 100 hectares on Henderson Farms in Oxford.
Left – The Nanobubble system uses microscopic oxygen bubbles that stay suspended in water for longer, delivering a constant supply of dissolved oxygen to the soil.

maintain stock around those drip lines.”

Roberts said that with technology constantly evolving, a solution could be developed with technology such as cow collars.

“In the future, technology like Halter may improve it if you find a way to keep stock away from the drip line.

“I see the real big benefits being on irrigated run-off blocks where you can cut and carry feed, and there is no stock.

“It’s something we want to stay at the coalface of because we believe there is potential here in some way.”

Nanobubble Agritech founder and chief executive Leon Power had seen the technology used in hydroponic units in horticulture and on high-end golf courses in Australia.

With a background in dairy farm-

ing and an agriscience degree from Massey, the former professional rugby player immediately saw the potential for the technology to aid pasture growth on dairy farms.

“Golf courses were using much less water and getting bigger, healthier roots.

“So I thought, if we can get that on a golf course, why can’t we do the same with dairy pasture and pivot irrigation.”

Power began to develop the technology four-and-a-half years ago, and acknowledges there are some challenges in integrating the drip lines with livestock.

“At the moment, we target farms with a good farm layout, so you can mostly keep the pivots from going through the cows.”

Power describes the technology as “an insurance policy” in dry seasons.

“It’s another tool farmers can use to get their water to go further and to be more efficient, and mitigate against having to buy a lot more feed in to get through dry periods.”

Henderson Farms, owned by Cam Henderson in Oxford, is the first farm to implement the system at scale with impressive results and is the farm’s second year with nanobubble irrigating 100 acres of pasture.

Results showed reduced water usage by 15-20%, as the system only needed to run three out of every four days, compared to others on the farm that run 24/7.

Results also showed an increase in dry matter yield

However, with a wetter-than-average season leading to a reduction in required irrigation, Henderson said it’s hard to know if the Nanobubble

is responsible for the increase.

“It’s difficult because it’s hard to isolate, and we haven’t had it running long enough, and I haven’t seen any data other than just walking around the paddock.

“Empirically, things look good, but we haven’t had the length of operation to get the data to back it up.”

However, Henderson can be sure of increased water efficiency due to reduced evaporation with the drip lines.

“Water savings is really what we are seeing.

“We are estimating a savings of around 20%.

“We notice it on those hot, windy days when most farmers can look out the window and see irrigation water blowing sideways, we know all our water is going straight into the soil.”



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ROUND ... HOW TO CHANGE THE SPIRAL

KATHRYN WRIGHT

Farming can bring with it some monotonous jobs, like tractor work, drenching, fencing, often with repetitive actions which means that your mind can wander.

Along with this, are your thoughts also going around and around in your head, for the six, eight, or 12 hours you are spending at a time doing those jobs?

Firstly, the good news is that you are normal and human.

Our brains are problem-solving machines that throw a lot of thoughts, ideas, information, memories and predictions at us, and it is virtually impossible to turn that off.

For some of you, you may even dream up your best ideas during this time.

Accepting that these thoughts are impossible to switch off can be very difficult for some people. It helps to know that this is a survival mechanism that does have some useful aspects to it, like being able to judge risk and danger, and creating healthy competition with others.

These thoughts are often reflective of the everyday experience of being a human.

So why is this experience so much more problematic for some people?

It's all about how much control your thoughts have over you, and how this then affects your behaviour.



This is known as fusion.

Know this, your thoughts are simply strings of images and words that come and go, they change like the weather, it is normal for them to fluctuate in terms of negative/positive or helpful/unhelpful.

Hardly any of them are based in fact.

They are often predictions of the worst, mind reading, fortune telling, black and white thinking, catastrophising, generalising, or dichotomous thinking.

We run into problems when we place too much weight on them – acting on them, believing them,

beating yourself up, saying or doing things you regret, trying to avoid them with alcohol or drugs – generally just not questioning the validity of them at all.

Can you respond flexibly to your thoughts?

Can you place some space in between your unhelpful spiralling thoughts by saying to yourself "I'm having the thought that ..." and then place your thought after that?

Can you imagine your thoughts are vehicles on a motorway, shifting, changing and moving? Can you imagine your thoughts as scripts on a cartoon strip, or write

them down with your non-dominant hand?

These are all evidence-based techniques to take some of the "puff" out of your thoughts.

Examining, making space for and allowing repetitive thoughts is equal to dropping the struggle with trying to control them – I understand that this may be quite the opposite to what you are told and taught in society, but trying to push them down isn't working, so why not approach it in a different way?

Try to "stand back" in your mind from your thoughts. Notice them, breathe into them, imagine that

your body is expanding in the chest area to make space for them.

If you are feeling brave, try welcoming them in – this sounds strange I know, but is also very much evidence-based and has helped many people before you. Check in with yourself.

Can you focus your attention on where you are right now – can you see the horizon, birds, grass, tree lanes?

Can you hear the tractor engine, the clunk of rocks (not too big I hope), the crackly radio, the sounds of the animals, far off voices or wind on the long grass?

Can you smell the diesel, the smell of warm dust, animal smells pleasant and unpleasant?

Is there anything else in this experience right here and now that you can just notice and be fully present in?

This is the beginning of learning how to live in the moment, free from the pain of the past or future.

If you can immerse yourself in some of these concepts, you will begin to understand what it feels like to gain a little control over where you focus your time and attention.

And a funny thing happens – by dropping the struggle with controlling your thoughts, they WILL begin to change for the better.

Kathryn Wright is a Registered Counsellor MNZAC
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10 peri to post menopause

EXERCISE QUESTIONS WITH KATE IVEY

KATE IVEY

Ten peri-to-post menopause exercise questions with Kate Ivey:

1. To start, what exactly do you mean by peri-to-post menopause?

A: Perimenopause is the transition period leading up to menopause when hormone levels start fluctuating, often causing symptoms like irregular periods, sleep disturbances, and mood changes.

Menopause is officially reached when you haven't had a period for 12 months, and post-menopause refers to everything after that.

This stage of life brings hormonal changes that can impact energy levels, metabolism, muscle mass and overall health.

2. What happens to the body during peri-to-post menopause?

A: To put it simply, hormone levels shift significantly. The hormones we once relied on for muscle growth, bone strength, insulin sensitivity, and recovery — like estrogen and progesterone — start to decline.

This can lead to muscle loss, reduced metabolism, an increased risk of osteoporosis and changes in fat distribution.

However, the right type of exercise can help counteract these changes, keeping women feeling stronger, healthier, and more energised.

3. What do you do for peri-to-post menopausal women, and how did you get into it?

A: I'm the founder of DediKate, an online fitness community designed for busy women. After seeing how many of our members were struggling with the changes brought on by peri-to-post menopause, I decided to dig deeper into the research.

I completed Dr Stacy Sims' Exercise and Menopause Course and was blown away by how much the right kind of exercise can transform women's health during this phase.

This led to the launch of DediKate Thrive in June, 2024, a specialised programme designed for peri-to-post menopausal women, offering research-backed workouts for all fitness levels.

4. What type of exercise should peri to post-menopausal women be doing and why?

A: The key focus should be on strength, speed and power, as these are the areas most affected by menopause-related hormonal changes. The best types of exercise include:

- Heavy lifting (strength training with weights)
- High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
- Sprint Interval Training (SIT)

These styles of training create enough of a stimulus to promote muscle growth, maintain metabolism, and improve insulin sensitivity

— even with lower estrogen levels.

5. HIIT and Sprint Interval Training sound intense! Can you explain what they are and if anyone can do them?

A: Absolutely! HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) involves short bursts of high effort, followed by rest or lower-intensity movement.

For example, working hard for 30 seconds, then resting for 30 seconds, repeated for 10–20 minutes. Sprint Interval Training (SIT) is similar but focuses on short, all-out efforts (10–30 seconds), followed by longer recovery periods.

The great news is that both can be modified for any fitness level, whether through sprinting, cycling, or even fast-paced walking. The key is pushing to your personal high intensity.

6. I've heard that HIIT isn't suitable for peri-to-post-menopause. Is that true?

A: This is a common misconception! HIIT is great for peri-to-post menopausal women — when done correctly.

The key is keeping workouts short to reach high intensity without prolonged stress hormone spikes.

Long HIIT sessions can lead to excess cortisol, which can be counterproductive for women in this stage of life. A good guide is to keep the work part of your HIIT workout to 20 minutes or less.

7. What about traditional cardio like jogging or cycling — can it still be part of a workout routine?

A: Yes, but with balance. Traditional cardio like jogging, cycling, or aerobic workouts is great for cardiovascular health and mental well-being, but it shouldn't be the main focus.

As we age, strength, power, and high-intensity training become even more important for maintaining muscle, metabolism, and bone density.

Think of it this way — cardio is great for your heart and mind, but strength training and interval training keep your body strong and capable.

8. As women get older, shouldn't they be slowing down?

A: Not necessarily! The idea that women should take it easy as they age is outdated.

In fact, research shows that challenging your body with strength and power exercises helps maintain independence, mobility and energy levels as you get older.

It's not about pushing beyond your limits — it's about training smartly to stay strong and capable for decades to come.

9. Is it ever too late to start? And what about beginners?

A: It's NEVER too late. Women in their 50s, 60s, and beyond can still



build strength, increase fitness, and feel amazing.

The body adapts at any age.

Beginners can start with body-weight exercises, light weights and modified HIIT, gradually building up intensity and resistance over time. The key is to just start — your future

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self will thank you!

10. Any final tips or advice for peri to post menopausal women?

A: Oh, there's so much I could share, but here are two key takeaways:
Focus on quality over quantity.

Rest and recovery are just as important as training.

The best guide for exercise intensity? It should feel either easy or hard — if it's stuck in the middle (not easy enough for recovery, not hard enough for real benefits), it's time to reassess.

Something is always better than nothing. If you're ever feeling overwhelmed about what you should or shouldn't be doing, go back to basics. Build consistent habits first — then refine your training as you go.

Kate Ivey is CEO of Kate Ivey Fitness

High Intensity Interval Training is great for women in peri-post menopause, and it's never too late to start.
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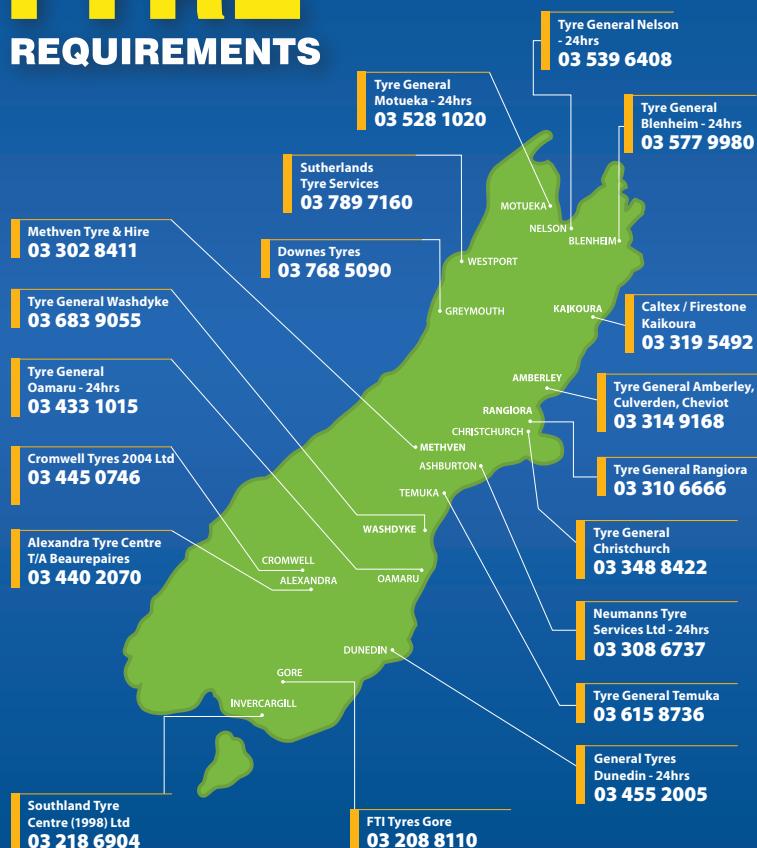


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CLAIRE INKSON

It's not bunnies causing excitement for machinery enthusiasts this Easter – it's Cats in what's being hailed as the "biggest noisiest birthday party" New Zealand has ever seen.

Wheels at Wanaka is putting Caterpillars (CAT) in the spotlight as the brand celebrates its 100 birthday in the events fourth and final year on April 18-20.

Event promoter Annabel Roy says organisers encourage anyone with a Cat in their shed to bring it to the three-day event.

"If they have a wee D2 in their shed, bring it along and join the world record attempt for the most Caterpillar machines in a parade," Roy said.

The Cat machine, developed in California, originated when salesman Benjamin Holt swapped a steam tractor's rear wheels for tracks, enabling farmers to work on soft soil. A company photographer remarked that the machine "moved like a big caterpillar", inspiring its name.

After merging with the Best Tractor Company in 1925, Caterpillar Tractor Co. became synonymous with earthmoving equipment.



Earthmoving enthusiasts from all over the country will gather for Wheels at Wanaka 2025. PHOTO SUPPLIED

A. S. Paterson was New Zealand's first Caterpillar tractor dealer.

In 1932, Gough, Gough and Hamer took a risk by importing five machines to showcase to the Ministry of Works.

The successful demonstration led to Cat earthmovers playing a pivotal role in New Zealand's major civil projects, such as roads, hydroelectric schemes, skifields,

and the development of much of the nation's farmland over the past century.

In addition to the world record attempt, the Terra Cat Earthmoving Extravaganza will be back. Spectators can see vintage and modern machines in action in one of the event's six arenas spread over a 60-acre site.

"The biggest point of difference with Wheels at Wanaka is that you can sit on a hay bale with a hot

dog and watch the machines as they move in front of you, which is why it has such an appeal across generations."

The event will also host the New Zealand round of the Caterpillar Global Operator Challenge, the first time the competition will be held in this country.

The event seeks New Zealand's best construction machine operators, and national winners will have a chance to compete against the world's best at ConExpo in Las Vegas in March.

If smaller machines are more your style, the event will also include vintage tractors, steam engines, vintage cars, motorbikes and trucks.

"We welcome all vehicles because that is what makes our show a success."

With 70,000 people expected at this year's event, those bringing vehicles are encouraged to register beforehand. "Arrival time will be very busy with that amount of vehicles through the gate."

"If people get online and register beforehand, it will save them some time on the day."

There is a different vehicle parade every 15 minutes, and a new category this year is the "Cars our parents drove", with people encouraged to enter cars that are

"cringey or cool".

"We like to have a wild card parade every year," Roy said.

The event includes a tractor pull, snowmobile drag racing, and an Enduro Cross competition, in which off-road motorbikes compete over an obstacle course.

OceanaGold is bringing some heavy-duty mining vehicles, a unique experience for spectators.

"Some of those vehicles never see daylight; they never leave underground."

"So, if you come and see nothing else, see those," Roy said.

Tickets and registration are available on the Wheels at Wanaka website, and the site's size need not deter those with mobility issues.

Shuttles will be running between the arenas at the event.

"You don't need to be fit as a fiddle to come and enjoy the show."

The event is a charitable trust, with profits going back to the community.

"We will divvy up the funds across as many community groups as we can and keep the money in Wanaka and the Central Lakes region."

While Wheels at Wanaka will be missed by locals and machinery enthusiasts alike, organisers are determined the final event will be the best to date.

"We want to go out on a high."

"We wanted to go out with a final bang for the fourth and final event," Roy said.

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Farming can be tough on joints

(Part 2)

Some occupations seem to increase the risk of osteoarthritis. I have spoken to many farmers whose osteoarthritis started when they came off second best in an incident with livestock. Builders, Mechanics, Nurses and similar roles are very physical. We know for certain that repetitive joint strain and trauma is a contributor to osteoarthritis.

There are also many people who develop osteoarthritis who have had more sedentary occupations. This indicates that 'wear and tear' is not necessarily the reason for cartilage loss. An X-ray of farmer or teacher with knee osteoarthritis look much the same despite significant differences in occupation.

The key diagnostic features on X-rays are a narrowing in the spaces between joints and the growth of bony spurs on the ends of the bones of the joint. X-rays do not show cartilage. All they show is the space between the bones. Cartilage is calculated on the size of the joint space. If

wide, this means cartilage exists. If little or none, this means the cartilage has largely disintegrated. It might surprise that cartilage is not lost by wear. It is lost by disease processes. Cartilage is maintained by amazing cells called chondrocytes. Each chondrocyte is responsible for maintaining a patch of cartilage. Chondrocytes are damaged by a combination of free radicals and destructive enzymes. Adding 800mg+ of Chondroitin sulphate can be very effective as this stimulates chondrocytes to secrete cartilage.

Nutritional therapy for osteoarthritis can be very effective. Last year I had a call from someone with pain from osteoarthritis in both his hips and knee. I started him on intensive doses of Chondroitin sulphate (1600mg) Glucosamine Sulphate (1600mg) and 100% water soluble curcumin extract (400mg). He noticed a difference within a few months and now reports significant benefits. Please email me if you would like a copy of my Osteoarthritis programme.



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



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John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

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They were also a popular addition to war effort cake stall fundraisers.

The biscuits were perfect because they kept well and did not contain eggs, which were often in short supply during the war.

Ingredients

1/2 C Edmonds standard grade flour
1/3 C white sugar
2/3 C finely desiccated coconut
3/4 C rolled oats
50g butter
1T golden syrup
1/2 t Edmonds baking soda

2T boiling water

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- Line a baking tray with baking paper.
- Mix together flour, sugar, coconut and rolled oats.
- Melt butter and golden syrup. Dissolve baking soda in the boiling water and add to butter and golden syrup.
- Stir butter mixture into the dry ingredients.
- Place level tablespoonfuls of mixture onto cold greased trays and flatten with a fork. These don't spread as they bake so you can place them close together.
- Bake for about 15 minutes or until golden. Leave on the tray for 5 minutes then place on a wire rack to cool

Recipe courtesy of Edmonds



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Who were the Land Girls?

THEY KEPT NEW ZEALAND EATING AND FARMS FUNCTIONING

NATALIE LIVERANT

Inspired by the British Land Girls of World War One, the Women's Land Service was established in New Zealand around 1940 to provide unmarried women from the age of 17 onwards suitable work on farms across the country.

This was promoted as a chance for women to "do their bit" for the war effort by filling the jobs left vacant by farm workers who had enlisted and were serving on the frontlines.

The mass exodus of skilled farm labour left a hole that desperately needed filling in order to maintain the agricultural industry that was to feed the country, as well as British citizens, and American soldiers stationed in New Zealand and around the Pacific.

This was also a unique opportunity, as traditionally farm work was men's work and any woman working on a farm was usually the farmer's own wife or daughters, and it could be assumed they were not receiving wages.

Land Girls were kitted out with a brown uniform, dungarees and a pair of work shoes. They were promised a place to sleep, meals and a wage from the farm at which they were placed.

On November 7, 1941, the Agricultural Workers' Labour Legislation Suspension Order ensured that "female agricultural workers



There were 4290 women registered as Land Girls in New Zealand during World War Two and more who took up the roll informally.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

... employed on dairy farms, or on farms and stations used for the commercial production of wool, meat, and/or grain" received a minimum wage of 30s (shillings) a week plus keep and were eligible for a raise to 35s after six months.

Women who were working on dairy farms started at 35s plus keep

which was raised to 42s after six months.

It should come as no surprise that during this time, materials and supplies were scarce and several requests were made publicly to Members of Parliament to find equipment for Land Girls to use at work.

Not every Land Girl had prior experience with farm work.

Some came from urban backgrounds or left school or office jobs and thus needed training before being sent into the fields.

Here in Canterbury, Lincoln University offered their first agricultural course to 22 women in March of 1941.

The course lasted six weeks and was jam-packed with information to prepare the women for the types of responsibilities they could expect on the job.

Upon completion, the women were swiftly sent into various farms and stations around the South Island.

The challenges they faced

Land Girls not only had gruelling work schedules, they also faced discrimination from the public.

In the book *Land Girls* in a *Man's World 1939-1946*, Dianne Bardsley travelled up and down the country in the 1990s to try and collect stories from surviving Land Girls.

While many of the women reminisced about the experience as an opportunity to learn new skills and grow a sense of resourcefulness in times of great scarcity, they also shared the challenges they faced with being women in a man's world.

Some of the challenges they faced included the idea that women's physical ability was inferior

to men and that the single women taking up these roles were disrespectful or immoral.

It was even more difficult for Māori women, who were turned away by farmers based on deeply ingrained prejudices that had nothing to do with the women's ability as a farmhand.

The work being done by Land Girls was very much needed, but acknowledgement and appreciation for that work was scarcely given.

There were 4290 women registered as Land Girls in New Zealand during World War Two and more who took up the roll informally.

They replaced a workforce left behind by 28,000 men.

Despite everything that was set against them, the Women's Land Service increased the level of agricultural production across the board, from grain and wool to produce and animals.

However, in 1946 the Land Service was disbanded and women were expected to go back to life as it was before the war.

Nonetheless, the women who chose to serve our country by undertaking roles that were not expected of them at the time helped change the future direction for the working woman.

Natalie Liverant used to work at the Ashburton Museum and her blog is being re-published with permission



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