

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

APRIL / MAY 2020

Methven
family set
seed standard

A passion
for alpaca

Spray options
open up for
farmers

Community
partnership keeps
on giving

New findings for
fodder beet



From the Group CEO

Welcome to this edition of Real Farmer.

Our cover story sees us visit the Marr Family who have farmed in what can be very unforgiving conditions for a cropping farmer. The Rakaia Gorge is famous for its howling nor'westerlies and challenging weather conditions, but the Marr family have spent five generations calling this place home and most recently have created a name for themselves by producing high quality seed. The family have taken on a raft of challenges over the years, including tighter environmental demands, biosecurity challenges and ever changing markets, and they have opened their gates to let us have a closer look at their farming operation.

Hamish Marr also talks to us about what prompted him to apply and successfully become a Nuffield Scholar and how he came to focus on the importance of glyphosate to the seed sector for his scholarship thesis. Agricultural reporter, Richard Rennie, also takes a look at glyphosate in a feature which sees him delve into the controversy surrounding the frequently used herbicide, and the debate around another family of sprays used in insecticide control—neonicotinoids.

Canterbury couple, Richard and Rebecca Moir are passionate about their alpacas. A fleeting comment saw the couple purchase 5, but that has quickly grown to a herd of almost 30 and the couple can see there is a huge future for alpaca and its fleece. They share their passion and knowledge with us and how their journey has progressed thus far.

This issue of Real Farmer also takes a look at a truly successful local event which Ruralco has been proud to be a part of since its inception in 2007. The Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge is a community partnership between Longbeach School and the Hinds & Districts Lions Club and over the years has raised over \$275,000 to benefit the people of Mid Canterbury. The event is run entirely by passionate volunteers and it caters for elite sports people, fast-paced competitive athletes, have-a-go weekend riders and recreational runners through to families, and children as young as six. We take a look at the history of this event and why it is so successful.

This is just a fraction of the great reading on offer in this Real Farmer and we hope you are able to take some time out to enjoy it.

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FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

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ON THE COVER:
Stuart & Hamish Marr with father
Graham in the middle

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Methven family set seed standard

Hamish Marr,
Nuffield Scholar

The Rakaia Gorge can be an unforgiving place to be a cropping farmer, with its howling nor'westerlies and inevitable weather challenges. But the Marr family have spent five generations carving a place for themselves in the dryland country, producing consistent high quality seed, playing their part in making the New Zealand seed industry an international source, respected for its weed free status, quality and variety.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

Hamish Marr and his wife Melanie have spent the past 15 years back on the family farm, working with Hamish's brother Stuart, his wife Jessica, and their parents Graham and Eleanor.

Between them they have taken on the raft of challenges now facing this generation of farmers, including tighter environmental demands, biosecurity challenges and ever changing market demands.

After graduating from Lincoln University with a Bachelor of Commerce in Farm Management, Hamish followed his parents' advice to head out and get experience off the farm.

For him this ended up being four years spent as an Ashburton based field officer for Ravensdown. While there he covered the spectrum of farmers and farm types that make up the patchwork rural quilt of Canterbury's farming landscape, literally from the high country to the sea.

"Mum and Dad have always encouraged us to do something away from the farm first, and did not want to see me back until I was about 30! I found the time at Ravensdown was invaluable."

"It came at a time when the only brief was to make regular contact with all his clients and ensure the most economic use of the fertiliser spend was agronomically appropriate. Being a co-operative we never pushed for a sale and



ABOVE: Hamish says it is a real privilege to be farming with family and it is very enjoyable to be doing it all together

BELOW: The 300 rising two year olds and 200 rising one year olds provide a good cash-flow against cropping's lumpier income patterns

always left the decision to the farmer, armed only with a cell phone, laptop and car."

"The brief was pretty wide open, and I loved the chance to make connections with so many different farmers. It helped build an ability to get on with people, and to listen to them. Even though I finished in 2005, I still get ex-clients today ringing me, asking advice on things like whether it is a good time to apply nitrogen or not."

It also opened his eyes to the inter-dependence and integration of Canterbury's farming systems. With dairying's relatively recent arrival back then, that interdependence strengthened even further, with the cropping sector delivering feed crops, dairy linking into calf rearing and beef finishing, and mixed operations building up grazing options. The significant variety of crops the Marrs grow for seed has simplified over recent years. Where once we were growing different types of vegetable seed, those opportunities have diminished somewhat of late due to the development of very reliable irrigation systems further down the plains. But since Hamish came home, the farm operation has established a more formal stock policy that integrates well with the complex cropping programme.

"Melanie and I reared calves for a number of years and carried them right through to finishing. Then one day our neighbour asked us if we would be keen to graze his heifers, and we have been doing that for 10 years now."

The 300 rising two year olds and 200 rising one year olds provide a good cash-flow against cropping's lumpier income patterns, and also fit well with grazing lambs, the other stock class the Marrs have introduced since coming home to farm.

"If you look at pasture as a crop on its own, the income per hectare is not as lucrative as some other crops but there is a lot less risk. What pasture gives an arable farm is probably the best break crop available and its real strength is the lengthening of rotation."

"We trade in grazing lambs from late summer through to mid-June, after which time the heifers come in along with 800 dairy cows to be wintered."

The 5,000 lambs also fit well with the seed cropping programme. The Marrs' main seed crop is cocksfoot grass seed, accounting for 170ha.

"The lambs are a good tool for us with the cocksfoot. They clean up the grass left in the paddocks, which we get six to seven harvests out of one sowing, and it is important to clean up the remainder once we have finished harvesting, which they do very well!"

Other crops include malting barley, oats and autumn wheat, process peas, along with smaller amounts of red clover, and fodder beet. In the past they have grown kale, radish, pak choi, bok choi, borage, potatoes and mustard.

Farming in a dryland environment with an annual rainfall of 1,200mm and 450m above sea level offers good cropping yields, but the howling winds through the Rakaia Gorge and onto the farm can also limit the choices of crop to grow.





ABOVE: Hamish (right) and his brother Stuart (left) work well together, with Hamish “keeping it growing” while Stuart an ex-aircraft engineer “keeps it going”, together here with their father Graham (centre)
 BELOW: The Marr’s seed cleaning and drying operation enables them to grow, harvest, dry and process much of their crop, and is attractive to their customers

“There are a few crops you can grow on the Plains themselves that are simply too challenging here when it comes to crops we have to leave to dry—the wind simply dictates we can’t do that for a lot of vegetable seed crops.”

“The wind also means ground cover is very important and we are very conscious of soil erosion. It is front and centre in most cropping and cultivation decisions. My grandfather used to say that soil came here in the wind and it will leave the same way.”

The family are always open to other options however. One that is increasingly popular in Canterbury and has been accompanied with plenty of profile lately is hemp seed, particularly now it has been granted approval to be sold as a human food.

The Marrs align themselves with all the major seed companies operating in Canterbury, and Hamish says the relationship they have is very much a partnership approach, based on a lot of mutual trust. Their seed cleaning and drying operation enables them to grow, harvest, dry and process much of their crop, and is attractive to their customers.

Hamish agrees the arable sector in Canterbury is enjoying something of a Renaissance right now. After a few years of seeing more farms convert to dairying, the numbers have stabilised. He believes that threat of seeing farms go out of cropping has sharpened the industry’s focus on success and quality.

The sector is also undergoing something of a generational shift as younger farmers come on board, adopting latest techniques and working hard on farm systems that are sustainable and likely to comply with growing environmental demands being placed upon them. “I think overall the industry is in very good heart. And while we don’t have irrigation, I am also

conscious about the positive effect irrigation systems have had on Canterbury, and the options and opportunities in all land use types that has bought with it, much of it quite recently.”

A year spent as a Nuffield Scholar (see accompanying article) also highlighted to him how respected New Zealand is as a safe place to source seed from, thanks to its tight biosecurity controls and lack of corruption at local and central government levels. “Both are important for our sector where purity is critical!”

Just as pastoral farming has been under the spotlight for environmental management, the same is applying to the cropping sector, with nitrogen losses and erosion particularly high on regulation lists. As Canterbury enters its seventh iteration of a plan change, Hamish is concerned about the assumptions based in Plan Change modelling, and just how realistic its expectations are.

As a Foundation for Arable Research committee member he is pushing hard for best practice standards to be applied throughout the industry by the industry rather than regulators. Although, it is a very difficult thing to identify absolute best practice because arable farming operations are all so different and different for so many reasons.



“But after what I have seen in Europe, we are very fortunate here to have the government be regulating on outcomes, rather than on inputs. Over there they dictate to farmers what they can apply, and when they can apply it.”

And he has seen evidence of how poorly applied regulation can impact upon farm productivity and even food quality.

“In Denmark they regulated nitrogen applications and use to only 70% of the economic optimum about 15 years ago. But what they found was the protein level in their cereals declined, impacting on milling quality and they ended up having to import cereal for flour.”

“Meantime their pork, a major export, was found to be less economic to produce because of the lower protein levels in the cereal feed meaning pigs took longer to finish. They have had to lift their nitrogen levels to try and deal with this.”

He believes there are lessons there for New Zealand and particularly Canterbury as attention turns to nitrate levels in ground water, and drawing a realistic line between healthy water and economic farm operations.

Hamish and his brother Stuart work well together, with Hamish “keeping it growing” while Stuart an ex-aircraft engineer “keeps it going”—maintaining the farm’s extensive inventory of equipment. Graham looks after the stock side of the operation and they employ one full time team member and one or two over summer.

Hamish says it is a real privilege to be farming with family and it is very enjoyable to be doing it all together. “There are unconscious synergies at play that you can only get within families and it is the little things that combine to create the overall ethos of the operation.”

Longer term Hamish feels very confident about arable farming in Canterbury and farming in general for New Zealand, a confidence reinforced after a year traversing the globe on his Nuffield scholarship. “We have a very compelling and real provenance story here, with people clambering over each other to get product from this part of the world, and we have to be cautious not to ruin that, but also be aware of the impact environmental standards could have—it’s about taking that part of our population not engaged in farming with us.”

Nuffield scholar challenges glyphos issues

The prompt for Hamish Marr to apply for a Nuffield Scholarship came one day when he was working a paddock on his tractor, listening to an interview between a Radio NZ journalist and then Environmental Protection Agency Chief Scientist Jacqueline Rowarth.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

"By the time I had got to the end of the paddock I was almost jumping out of my cab. The line of questioning was about the use of glyphosate and its supposed effects. The interviewer could not leave it alone, and I felt that because they were not getting the answers they felt they wanted, they kept at it."

The essence of the questioning was focused on unsubstantiated claims glyphosate was linked to human health issues and whether it should be banned as a herbicide.

"It struck me coming from the seed sector and appreciating how important glyphosate is to us, what the implications could be of that if we relented to pressure, and how would our industry and our farms look if this was to happen?"

It was the prompt he needed for a scholarship thesis, and he was accepted to the prestigious Nuffield programme. It demanded 16 weeks of international travel including 6 weeks of a compulsory travel tour and at least 10 weeks of independent study.

By his own admission it was an extensive, demanding schedule for anyone running a family farm, married and with three young children. "But I could also see that this was an important subject, and that became even clearer as I travelled through Europe, United States, Indonesia, Asia and Sweden. All countries with the exception of Japan and Indonesia are facing the same challenges around glyphosate, and how to respond to claims about its effects."

Hamish saw guarded governmental response to glyphosate opposition as a recognition that modern farming could not simply drop glyphosate overnight. "So governments are pretty cagey about reducing it, with the exception of Germany and France."

Those two countries have agreed to ban glyphosate use by 2023, despite arguments by farmers, agricultural science and the industry that the product was a vital tool for ensuring the viability, efficiency and sustainability of agriculture.

The ban follows claims by scientists in those countries that glyphosate has contributed to declines in insect populations. There have also been claims it contributes to cancer in humans. Campaigns to save bees in Germany have linked glyphosate to population declines, despite the



product being a herbicide, not an insecticide.

The decision by France and Germany comes despite EU rules preventing individual companies making such rules specific to themselves. It also came after fierce debate in the German parliament that included Germany's agricultural minister voting in favour of extending glyphosate's use.

"And it has been acknowledged by the Minister of Agriculture that the cost of farming will rise, and the environmental challenges will increase."

He found in the United States distrust of glyphosate tended to be linked to lingering distrust of Monsanto's "Roundup Ready" genetically modified soybeans, canola, beet and cotton. However the use of these crops has also significantly reduced the need to use higher toxicity spray treatments like atrazine.

Hamish's work found that compared to past means of weed control, with their high level of toxic residues and human health effects, glyphosate is a far more preferable option both for farmers and consumers.

Glyphosate was and still is marketed as a very benign chemical that targets an enzyme specific to plants. It is has a very short half life in the soil meaning in New Zealand there are no issues with root absorption.

"It has a very low residue. Over 20 years ago when it was developed no one looked for it in food residues, now they do and yes there are residues there but it is a very low risk product. But this leaves farmers and the industry facing something of a dilemma about where they can use glyphosate or not."

Hamish recounts the dictum of Swiss physician Paracelsus who said "the dose makes the poison", in that anything is poisonous if administered in sufficient quantity.

A World Health Organisation report in 2015 initially found glyphosate was 'probably' carcinogenic to humans, only to be contradicted a year later with a report from the same organisation stating it was 'unlikely' to pose a cancer risk to humans.

A consulting toxicologist to the report's taskforce said at the time the second report examined harm levels and while there was value in knowing the hazard of a substance that was

not the complete picture. Hazard and exposure amount were needed to determine if there was indeed a cancer risk.

Hamish agreed. "It is all about the MRL or maximum residue level, the highest amount that is allowed in food and not exceeding them. There is as much literature out there stating glyphosate is safe as there is stating otherwise. However this has become as much a social issue as it is a farming issue. Ultimately anything will be toxic to you, if you consume it in sufficient dose."

He believes the farming sector has the ability to adapt some practices on weed control to reduce the use of glyphosate by looking at the bigger picture.

"But we have managed to replace a number of quite horrible chemicals with one that is far lower risk. I believe a lot of people don't understand where we have come from, people don't know what they don't know, and the loudest voices are so often being heard."

It is known as a one in one hundred year chemical for its versatility and low risk status.

"There is a certain irony in that if it were invented today, it would fly off the shelves because it would be a more consumer friendly fit than the alternative."

"The seed industry cannot afford to lose glyphosate, if it goes, so too does the industry. In its place are animals or commodity grains. We need to respect the importance of the product and not over use. It is a very, very complicated issue and can not be viewed as one product on one crop in isolation but more agriculture at large and the systems that intertwine through it all."

Now back on the farm after a hectic year of travel, study and writing, Hamish says if he was offered the chance to go again tomorrow, "I'd be gone by this afternoon!"

"I was humbled to have the opportunity to take up the scholarship, and felt like an All Black of agriculture."

"I have seen how farmers face so many of the same problems, but also learnt to appreciate how lucky we actually are here in New Zealand. We are a relatively young country, our soils have not been hammered and we have great provenance and excellent biosecurity."

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Waste no water

Do you think Australia would waste water like we do in New Zealand? I don't think so. One of the main differences between New Zealand and Australia is that we get a lot of rain, and they don't. But the other difference is that in Australia, they store the water that they get, whereas we don't. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY MIKE CHAPMAN, HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND CHIEF EXECUTIVE



IMAGE: Waimea Dam under construction. Lee Valley, Nelson

In New Zealand, droughts have historically been a seasonal phenomenon but now, there is a worrying similarity to Australia. It is quite likely that as the impacts of climate change increase, droughts in New Zealand could continue well beyond summer.

We need to act while we can. The answer is very simple: catch the rain when it falls, store the water, and then use it when droughts strike. Therefore, the announcement that the Provincial Growth Fund is investing \$7.11 million to create a sustainable water supply for the Wairarapa is indeed excellent news. This will be achieved by water storage.

“We need to act while we can. The answer is very simple: catch the rain when it falls, store the water, and then use it when droughts strike.”

But we need to be increasing water storage across the entire country: ‘one swallow does not make a summer’. If we are going to manage the impacts of climate change, we need water storage schemes like the one in the Wairarapa across New Zealand.

One of the biggest impediments to water storage is the difficulty that growers and farmers face in getting the regulatory

approvals for private water storage. The Government and Councils need to move immediately to get rid of all the unnecessary red tape and make water storage a real option for everyone.

“Why is there not a requirement that every new urban house has water storage to supplement town supply?”

Implementing water storage also needs to include everyone in town. Why is there not a requirement that every new urban house has water storage to supplement town supply?

There's another comparison to be made with Australia. The Australia Federal Government is spending \$30 million buying water rights off farmers in the Darling River in New South Wales. This is because farming ventures have failed because the Darling River dried up in 2015.

We need to learn lessons from Australia, use our plentiful rain supply and not waste this precious resource. It is time to get serious about water storage before it is too late.

Capitalism vs. prescription

Shortly after becoming Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern commented that capitalism has been “a blatant failure”. However

New Zealand is and has been for many years, a mix of capitalism and socialistic programmes and policies. This has been the case with all of our governments no matter what their political persuasion has been.

Capitalism is defined as “an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state”. But I would argue that very little in New Zealand's trade and industry is controlled by private owners. Most of our businesses are extensively dictated to by Government and Councils. This is not capitalism as it has been defined.

New Zealand is embarking on a new decade, with an enormous challenge to every business—be they rural or urban—as we collectively meet climate change and improve freshwater quality.

Government and Councils essentially have two options to achieve these environmental outcomes. The first option is to do what has been done over past decades. That is, set in law what is to happen down to absolute detail. The second option is to take a different, outcome-based approach, where government and councils establish what they want to achieve and then partner with business within a regulatory framework to achieve these outcomes.

“New Zealand is embarking on a new decade, with enormous challenge to every business—be they rural or urban—as we collectively meet climate change and improve freshwater quality.”

With climate change, the food and fibre sector has entered into such a partnership with this Government with some very firm outcomes now written into the Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Reform) Amendment Bill, which will soon be made law.

This partnership approach now needs to be extended to freshwater quality and allocation. It will only be through environmental partnerships that we, as a country, will achieve sustainable outcomes.



Spray options open up for farmers

In a social media ‘news’ environment where fiction can quickly be taken up as fact, consumers wanting to understand where their food comes from and how safe it is, can struggle to know if what they are hearing is real, or indeed true. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

Opposition to pesticides and herbicides is bringing pressure to bear on farmers charged with growing high quality food in a way that is sustainable for the planet, and economic for them.

The most virulent debate lately around the use of sprays on crops has been the use of glyphosate. The low residue spray is one of most frequently used herbicides whose development 40 years ago helped revolutionise agriculture and redefine sustainability in both cropping methods, and spray practices.

The debate around glyphosate was ignited back in 2015 thanks largely to a classification of it as a “carcinogen” or cancer causing agent by the International Cancer Research agency. What was often not reported was the same announcement also included some common

everyday products and foods including talcum powder, coffee and bacon as “possibly carcinogenic”.

At its simplest level, almost anything will cause cancer if ingested in sufficient volumes. Agcarm is the group representing chemical companies supplying New Zealand with crop and animal treatments.

Chief Executive of Agcarm Mark Ross said this classification has caused a huge degree of unnecessary concern among the public, given this was the only World Health Organisation agency to find a link between glyphosate and cancer.

“The International Agency for Research on Cancer’s (IARC) review was not a risk assessment. The actual risk is determined by the type and extent of human exposure,” he said.

“This was reinforced by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) group stating glyphosate was unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through the diet.”

New Zealand’s own environmental watchdog, the Environmental Protection Agency has also concluded the product was unlikely to be carcinogenic.

The swirl of debate around glyphosate highlights how vulnerable consumer perceptions are to interpretation of data. Mark Ross points to the 800-plus studies which have all validated the product’s safety.

Meantime debate has also been constantly lapping at the use of another family of sprays used in insecticide control—neonicotinoids.

Used to protect crops often in seed treatment form, there has long been debate that the residual impact from the seed treatment has a systemic effect on plants, lasting the plant's lifetime and therefore having an impact upon bees pollinating that mature plant.

The collapse of bee populations in Europe has been blamed upon "neo-nics" and similar claims in localised districts have also been made here in New Zealand in the past decade. But both Australia and New Zealand have had 25 years of neonicotinoid use and bee populations in both countries are at all-time highs.

The depletion of bee populations in some areas in the past decade at different times has been instead attributed to the varroa mite establishing here in the early 2000s, to the extent bees now rely upon human intervention to keep them healthy.

An Agcarm report on the economic value of seed treatments using neonicotinoids to the New Zealand economy indicated if they were removed it would cost the economy between \$800 million and \$1.2 billion in the short to medium term.

In an effort to try and fill the control gap left in their absence, farmers would be forced to blanket spray emerging crops, at significantly greater cost and higher levels of pesticide use per hectare.

A small survey of registered dietitians in the United States late last year found over 90% of them were concerned fear based messaging about pesticides on produce was causing unnecessary concern over whether conventionally grown fruits and vegetables were safe to eat, in turn having a significant effect upon healthy dietary intakes.

New Zealanders' fruit and vegetables are constantly monitored through the New Zealand Total Diet Study, giving consumers the highest level of assurance their food is safe.

The latest study issued in May 2018 confirmed pesticide chemical residues found in New Zealand foods are at levels far below tolerances established by national and international food safety standards, and do not pose a safety concern.

In fact, the amount of pesticides found were actually lower today than in the past and consumers should not feel compelled to "go organic" simply to avoid residues in conventional crops.

But with perception often forming 90% of reality, more farmers are recognising the value in seeking options to chemical treatments if possible. This is as much to avoid resistance developing in weeds and pests than for any perceived residue risk. Regenerative agriculture is proving to play a part here as more farmers look to ways to minimise tilling their soil, build organic matter up and increase their farm's biodiversity.

With that comes the added benefit of lower fertiliser and crop treatment costs.

Canterbury farmer and Ruralco member Simon Osborne has become a face for the practice in the South Island after he continued the radical "no till" approach adopted by his father in the 1970s.

Years of tillage had left the farm's soil tired and depleted when his Dad decided to go that way, quite a shift in mindset for farmers at the time.

Over time and now under Simon's guidance, the farm has had a gradual improvement in soil quality with organic matter doubling from what it was in the 1970s.

Practices include re-incorporating stubble into the soil, and growing cover crops with up to 20 different species of plants all mixed together.

He is also experimenting with inter-crop plantings combining the likes of crimson clover with cereals—these have helped suppress weed growth, and with that comes a need to use less herbicides.

Further work in combining crop types may lead to even greater reduction in chemical control use, with some crops forming natural pyrethrums to repel pests from the main crops being grown.

For Simon, the practice is very much a series of experiments which has also included re-thinking what constitutes a "tidy" farm.

Instead, fence lines as living strips to grow plants along that may play a role in building soil carbon and providing a place for organisms and insects to overwinter in.

Biological controls for pests and diseases on farms is often associated with bringing in a predator pest to deal to a problem pest.

Often seen as a living "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff", New Zealand has enjoyed some good successes with this non-chemical approach in the past.

The most recent has been AgResearch's introduction of the parasitic wasp *M.aethioides* to control the clover root weevil that devastated New Zealand's invaluable clover reserves on farms from Northland to Canterbury in the early 2000s.

Losses of 50-100% of pasture clover were recorded on farms, pushing farmers to have to reach for synthetic nitrogen to make up the shortfall, with the inevitable environmental impacts that brings.

New Zealand also now has the Samurai wasp on standby and already approved as a biological control agent should this country be overrun by the dreaded Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.

Already rife throughout fruit growing areas of northern Italy, the stink bug has a voracious appetite and has written off that country's pear industry and is costing the sector almost NZ\$400 million a year in lost earnings.

Should it get into New Zealand, the losses would mount quickly as it ate its way through most of the country's significant horticultural crops before establishing in seed and cereal areas.

The work by New Zealand researchers with their Italian colleagues on stink bug control is also developing some non-chemical techniques that may yet provide solutions to controlling other bugs.

Professor Max Suckling, New Zealand's leading authority on biological control, is excited by a range of methods rapidly being developed in conjunction with the Italians.

One of these is biotremology technology which involves using synthesised insect mating calls to draw pests from across an orchard area into a trap.

It is a type of "pied piper" technology in its infancy that may prove effective in fighting stink bugs in Italy, and being a monitoring tool in the early stages of an outbreak here in New Zealand.

Professor Suckling and his team in New Zealand also earned international recognition for their work with sterile moths to control a codling moth outbreak in Hawke's Bay orchards in 2018.

A million sterile moths were imported in 2018 and dropped by drone over orchards to breed with the local population, dramatically reducing the moth population without any use of additional insecticide.

Pheromone traps were used to draw in and monitor the results, with just one adult codling moth captured in a 100ha orchard after the drone 'attack'.

It is a technique Suckling believes could be applied to the stink bugs, should they advance into New Zealand orchards and farms.

Reducing insects and disease using fungal endophytes is another novel non-chemical approach to dealing with pests and diseases in crops that New Zealand researchers are leading the world in.

Living naturally on plants, endophytes have already been used with great success as the AR1 and AR37 endophytes. AR37 is the only endophyte to offer protection against porina caterpillar and Argentine Stem weevil larvae, while AR1 offers protection from Argentine Stem weevil adult and the mealy bug.

Funding to AgResearch is helping scientists look harder at endophytes in cereal crops, isolating those that may have a positive benefit for crops, and inoculate them into other cereal crops.

Trial crops at Lincoln are studying potential gains in crop productivity or pest control. Early indications are the main role will be in being "bio-controls" for pests, similar to what AR37 does.

The researchers are also revisiting ancient maize varieties from Mexico to see if they can identify any endophytes that may have been lost due to commercial varieties coming to dominate the seed market.



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Despite the dry weather, stock around our region are in great condition which is testament to our farmers' management skills and genetics which underpin our world-leading production systems. WORDS SUPPLIED BY NICKY HYSLOP, DIRECTOR, BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND



IMAGE: What is not well known in New Zealand is that the sheep and beef sector has reduced its absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 32 percent since 1990

valued by farmers for both aesthetic and functional reasons and we welcome the government's willingness to protect and enhance this country's native biodiversity through the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB). However, there are parts of the policy we have concerns about, particularly the broad definitions of Significant Natural Areas (SNA) and potential restrictions on farming activities that can be carried out within a SNA.

There is a lot in the NPSIB that farmers support, but these areas need to be worked through carefully to ensure that the NPSIB recognizes and allows productive farming practices to sit alongside indigenous biodiversity.

As we head into the cooler months, we will be thinking about winter feed and I really encourage farmers to think about what best practice looks like on their farm when it comes to feeding crops.

Winter feed crops have been subject to media scrutiny over the past couple of years and were central to an animal welfare campaign last year.

While the vast majority manage these valuable crops responsibly, it does pay to remind ourselves what we need to do before grazing to prevent nutrients and sediments getting into waterways and to preserve our soil.

Taking the time to identify and fence off critical source areas, thinking about the direction of grazing and having contingency plans in place for extreme weather will all help minimise our environmental impact.

These crops are a hugely valuable feed source and we don't want to jeopardise our ability to use them.

There is wealth of information on the B+LNZ website about winter grazing, so have a look now before getting on those crops.



LEFT: Nicky Hyslop, Director, Beef + Lamb New Zealand

Like any business, we have our challenges, but it is our farmers ability to adapt to change and evolve their businesses in line with changing consumer, societal and regulatory requirements that, I believe, sets us apart.

One of the biggest drivers of change is climate change, as this impacts on farmers' businesses on so many levels.

While we are having to build resilience into our farming systems in response to climatic extremes, we also need to respond to regulations developed to reduce this country's greenhouse gas emissions and do our bit to slow global warming.

On top of this, is a massive media focus around red meat consumption and its link to global warming.

While livestock production does create greenhouse gas emissions and there is still more for our sector to do, what is not well known in New Zealand is that the sheep and beef sector has reduced its absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 32 percent since 1990. No other sector in NZ has achieved this.

There are also a huge number of trees on sheep and beef farms. B+LNZ has commissioned research to measure the amount of emissions that are being offset by these trees and hope to release a report on this in the next few months.

The challenge for the red meat sector is to leverage our natural advantage to generate a premium in the marketplace and this was the reason Beef + Lamb New Zealand invested in the development of Taste Pure Nature, New Zealand's first Red Meat brand.

The brand was launched onto the Californian market in March last year and in those 11 months there have been over one billion media impressions. These include 270,917 website visits, 6,382,805 brand video views, 327,000 ad clicks and 108,463 social media engagements.

Earlier this year Taste Pure Nature was launched in China and B+LNZ is working with industry partners on a roll-out strategy. NZ's natural environment is central to Taste Pure Nature and this includes native biodiversity, much of which sits on sheep and farms.

Native Flora and Fauna are typically highly



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Why is health insurance important for rural communities?

Accuro Health Insurance is proud to be the official health insurance partner of Ruralco, offering cardholders a 5% discount off the life of their policy.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY ACCURO HEALTH INSURANCE



New Zealand's rural communities are facing 'an unacceptable level of health service accessibility.' According to an interim government report, 25% of rural general practices are looking for full-time GPs, a third of pharmacies are struggling with recruitment and a shortage of midwives has seen the closure of rural birthing units across the country. 174,000 New Zealanders have been told that they need surgery but that there is currently no space for them on the waiting list. Our health care system is struggling and those in rural areas are wearing the brunt of it more than their urban neighbours.

If you needed surgery or specialist care, could you afford to wait?

Unexpected health issues can force time out of the workplace and impact productivity. According to recent government research, three conditions account for 53% of our loss of productivity in the New Zealand workforce: neuropsychological conditions (including depression), cancer and cardiovascular conditions such as heart disease. Accuro saw a number of opportunities where proactive management of these conditions could

reduce the occurrence or the severity.

In the government's enquiry into mental health and addiction services, a number of issues specific to regional communities were raised, including that those in rural communities were less likely to seek the support of mental health services, that there were fewer services available and that there were concerns about anonymity from those services. The enquiry sparked a number of actions from the government, including a \$1.9 billion investment package into mental health services. In September 2019, after observing growing publicity around the shortcomings of the mental health system in New Zealand, Accuro launched the Mental Health Navigator (MHN) to its membership. This provides a free consultation with a mental health team via phone call and video conferencing, reducing some of the barriers to accessing services, especially for rural communities.

Cancer is another area where early detection and access to treatment can dramatically change the final outcome. Yet despite having the world's worst rate of death from melanoma, we spend less than \$400,000 a year on prevention and fewer than a third of our primary schools are "sun smart". Cancer care is not consistent across NZ with no overarching national model. Instead, services are run by each District Health Board (DHB) with whatever budget and services they have available.

Currently, only half of DHBs are delivering target outcomes for cancer patients. Cover for cancer is one of the main reasons why people choose to take out health insurance and Accuro goes even further by offering preventative cancer services such as free access to the SkinVision app, where you can track and manage your skin health, as well as free bowel screening kits. If you were to receive a positive cancer diagnosis, Accuro provides some of the highest levels of cover for chemotherapy drugs that aren't publicly funded.

Health insurance gives you fast access to medical care but there are benefits only available to Accuro members. You have access to a number of free services that support the rural community including:

- Ask a GP online;
- Access to mental health specialists;
- Access to over 50,000 global medical experts from anywhere in NZ;
- A personalised online wellbeing platform.

Additionally, if you need to travel overnight to see a specialist, our policies have a benefit for travel and accommodation expenses.

Your location shouldn't determine the level of care that you receive. For better access to health care when you need it, head to Accuro.co.nz/Ruralco.

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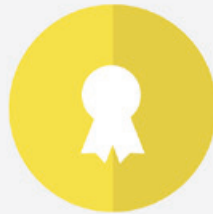
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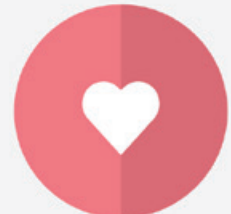
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Connection the key to completing well

HAVE YOU EVER SET A GOAL TO COMPLETE AN EVENT, SIGNED UP AND LOCKED IT ON ONLY TO GET TO RACE DAY AND REALISE YOU HAVEN'T DONE THE TRAINING YOU INTENDED TO, THEN FINISH DISAPPOINTED? THE KATHMANDU COAST TO COAST, SPRING CHALLENGE AND OTHER ADVENTURE / MULTI-SPORT RACES ARE INSPIRING MANY NEWCOMERS TO TAKE UP A CHALLENGE! HERE'S SOME TIPS ABOUT SELECTING THE RIGHT EVENT AND HOW BEST TO GET TO THE FINISH LINE.

- 1** *Select an event that you connect with, something that gets you excited and will be a challenge.*
- 2** *Find an exercise plan or recruit a coach. By connecting with a coach you'll become accountable, stay on track and work to a programme that will suit your individual needs and event goals.*
- 3** *Set realistic goals. Consider how much time you really have to commit to the event. Be happy to make sacrifices and decide how much time you are willing to put aside for it.*
- 4** *Find friends and make plenty of new friends. Although race day may be an individual event, the world of multisport, cycling and running is very social. Most people are willing to share their experience and knowledge.*
- 5** *Find new places to train. Involve the family with days by the river while you kayak or walks for the family while you take a run.*

MOST IMPORTANTLY:

Believe in yourself. If it is important to you, then you are never too busy, you just make time.



FITNESS CONTRIBUTOR
SOMMER O'SHEA,
PERSONAL TRAINER
GARAGE GYM,
METHVEN

ANZAC DAY AMRAP

A PUBLIC HOLIDAY DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN A DAY OFF WORKOUTS—YOU MIGHT HAVE MORE TIME!

Try this 19 minute AMRAP (As Many Rounds As Possible) for a HIIT workout today!

Set a Countdown Timer for 19 minutes

- 15 x Burpees
- 15 x Squat Jumps
- 15 x Tricep Dips
- 15 x Press ups
- 15 x Sit ups

Repeat these five moves in this order for as many rounds as possible.

FOOD



ANZAC Biscuits

A FAMILY FAVOURITE THAT KEEP, IF THEY LAST THAT LONG, IN AN AIRTIGHT TIN FOR 10 DAYS.

The ANZAC Biscuit was sent by wives and women's groups to soldiers abroad as the ingredients did not spoil and kept well during naval transportation.

Today an ANZAC Biscuits is still a lovely biscuit to stack and tie with ribbon and give away to a loved one. Simply delicious and easy to make.

I like to serve the humble ANZAC Biscuit with a sprig or two of rosemary which is the herb of remembrance and friendship.

Ingredients

- 1 cup each of wholegrain rolled oats, flour, coconut and brown sugar
- ¼ cup of golden syrup
- 125g butter
- 2 tbsp boiling water
- ½ tsp baking soda

Method

Turn the oven on to 160°C fan bake.

Combine the rolled oats, flour, coconut and brown sugar in a mixing bowl.

Heat together the butter, golden syrup and water. Stir in the baking soda and mix with the dry ingredients.

Roll into balls—I prefer small and crunchy biscuits so flatten them on a lined tray and bake for 15 minutes (watch carefully to get your desired colour).

Cool on a tray when they turn hard and crisp.



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While we all love to have fun in the sun, it's really easy to overdo it. The New Zealand sun is really harsh, and even with the best of intentions it can be hard to avoid tan lines and sunburn.

Molecheck Manager Sue Wood says our love of the sun can be deadly.

"We have one of the highest melanoma incidence rates in the world, with two in three New Zealanders developing a skin cancer over their lifetime. The good news is that most skin cancers can be avoided by being sunsmart and getting any suspicious spots checked out early," says Sue.

Sue says just like blood pressure, mammograms or a dental checkup, it's important to monitor your skin's health.

"As we get to the end of another summer, it's time to tick off your skin check as well."

Skin cancer is more common the older you are. The risk is also higher in fair skinned people, those who spend a lot of time outdoors (work or sport), have a family history of skin cancer or have had any episodes of bad sunburn as a child.

And if a spot has changed, becomes raised, is sore, itchy or scaly, or a new spot appears—get it checked by a professional. The sooner skin cancers are detected the simpler the treatment and the more successful it is likely to be.

The Molecheck team of skin cancer doctors use the latest dermoscopy techniques to view structures beneath the skin surface, so they can diagnose melanoma and other skin cancers at the very earliest possible stage, often before they can be seen with the naked eye.

All Molecheck patients receive a thorough and comprehensive skin cancer and melanoma check. If anything crops up in the first consultation, the skin cancer doctors have the ability and confidence to diagnose lesions right there and then, and where appropriate, treat them on the spot.

Molecheck has clinics in Auckland and Christchurch, and is teaming up with Ruralco to provide skin checks in Mid Canterbury. Keep an eye out for more information coming your way, follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/molecheck or flick us an email: admin@molecheck.co.nz

To find out more, and to make a booking, visit www.molecheck.co.nz or phone 0800 Molecheck.



Recommended Sunscreens

THE INCREASING RISK OF SKIN DISEASE CAN BE MITIGATED THROUGH THE REGULAR APPLICATION OF SUNSCREEN. THERE IS A WIDE VARIETY OF PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET AND SOME ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS. AT WISES COMMUNITY PHARMACY WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING PRODUCTS BASED ON A COMBINATION OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND PRICE POINT. WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT PEOPLE SUPPLEMENT THE USE OF SUNSCREEN WITH THE WEARING OF A HAT AND WHERE POSSIBLE, LIMIT THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE HARSHTEST SUNLIGHT HOURS.



THE INVISIBLE ZINC RANGE:

A range of great quality sunscreens that are chemical free. The active ingredient used in this range is Zinc Oxide which forms a physical barrier on the skin to protection against the harmful effects of the sun.



THE SUN SENSE RANGE:

A good product that always tests well in quality control and consumer research tests.



NEUTROGENA BEACH DEFENCE:

Another high quality sunscreen, but this one is applied by way of a spray which is arguably more convenient when you are playing sport or sitting on the beach, or for getting to those hard to reach or hairier areas that might otherwise be difficult to protect. It's also waterproof.



THE NIVEA RANGE:

A well regarded range of sunscreens offering a good level of protection. The Nivea products are easy to apply, have a pleasant fragrance and are priced at a level that offers good value for the whole family.

Preparing for Winter

WORDS BY SARAH GREEN CMHRINZ, RURALCO GROUP MANAGER PEOPLE AND CAPABILITY



THAT TIME OF YEAR IS LOOMING WHEN THE TEMPERATURE DROPS AND THE ANNUALS COLDS AND FLU'S START TO SURFACE AND DURING THE CURRENT COVID-19 CRISIS THERE IS NO BETTER TIME THAN TO KEEP YOURSELVES AND YOUR STAFF HEALTHY.

When you are running a business extensive sickness can create a very stressful time. Here in NZ we tend to have a strong presenteeism culture: showing up whatever the weather and however you are feeling. While you may initially think those employees that harden up and show up when they are not feeling great are doing you a favour, inevitably this approach is detrimental to business. Sometimes it is unavoidable, but as leaders in business we need take the time to encourage our staff to recover from illnesses before they return to work.

Especially with the current global health crisis, as employers we all need to be very aware of the health of our workforce.

SOME TIPS TO SEE YOU THROUGH THE COLD AND FLU SEASON

- Make sure you have clear sickness absence policy and all staff are aware of it. Ensuring staff are aware of who to contact and by when. Make it clear when absence certificates are required and retain the right to request a certificate as part of your policy to address habitual absenteeism. Check employees contracts and make sure they mirror any policy, if they don't, consult employees and make the necessary changes.
- If someone is sick—send them home, don't leave them struggling in their post spreading germs to colleagues and clients.
- Ensure simple procedures in the work place are promoted, for instance washing hands and reminding staff to cover mouths and noses when they cough or sneeze.
- Be accommodating. It is proven that a workplace with a more accommodating approach will in fact reduce the number of hours spent on sick leave. In the US and Europe many organisations who have formally increased sick leave benefits have seen sick leave days reduce.
- Arrange for wellness checks and flu jabs within the business. Whilst they won't provide the complete solution, it demonstrates to employees the positive supportive culture you have in the workplace.
- Encourage staff to keep active and where possible provide healthy options for morning teas—that extra boost of vitamin C in the winter months just might do the trick.
- You should now be thinking about policies to support staff in the event of Covid-19 worsening in NZ. Think about the opportunity for people to work from home, help staff understand the entitlements available to them and most of all be supportive and look after each other.

BRING YOUR TEAM IN FOR FLU VACCINATIONS

SPECIAL \$25

Bring your team and take advantage of our special for: flu vax, blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol check.

Our nurses will be in these Ruralco stores:

- **ASHBURTON** Tuesday 28 April 9-3pm
- **METHVEN** Tuesday 5 May 9-3pm
- **RAKAIA** Thursday 7 May 10-3pm

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WELLNESS & FLU CHECKUPS

WORDS SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS

ENSURING YOUR WORKERS ARE FIT FOR WORK SHOULD ALWAYS BE PARAMOUNT IN AN EMPLOYER'S MIND. BUT WHAT DOES FIT FOR WORK MEAN? IT ESSENTIALLY MEANS THAT A WORKER CAN PHYSICALLY, AND MENTALLY, PERFORM THE TASKS THAT YOU ARE ASSIGNING TO THEM COMPETENTLY AND SAFELY. THIS FITNESS CAN BE AFFECTED BY FATIGUE, HEALTH ISSUES, EMOTIONAL ISSUES AND MENTAL WELLNESS.

This month we're going to touch on wellness screening as a way of assisting a worker's fitness for work as well as answering some common questions around the upcoming flu shot season.

WHAT IS WELLNESS SCREENING?

Wellness screening aims to detect current illness or early signs of ill health (i.e. diabetes) through screening of blood pressure, BMI, cholesterol and glucose. While this testing is not part of the legal requirement for occupational health screening it is a worker's wellness, or general health, that can directly affect their fitness for work and their ability to work safely, or simply function well, in daily life. Wellness is linked to greater productivity, less absenteeism and fewer sick days for the employer and increased self-confidence and overall life satisfaction for workers.

FLU SEASON

The 1st of April marks the start of the flu season here in NZ. We experience a seasonal flu epidemic every year from about April to October. For those of you who've had the flu you'll know that you'll feel awful. The aches, exhaustion, fevers and other symptoms are usually self-limiting and it's not uncommon to feel totally wiped out and be unable to work for up to two weeks. The Ministry of Health suggest that many people can benefit from the protection of an annual flu shot.

The flu vaccine is available from the 1st of April so we thought we'd answer some of the frequently asked questions.

DO I NEED A FLU VAX EVERY YEAR?

The strains included in the vaccine change, so it's important to get immunised on an annual basis, as the protection you receive doesn't last much beyond 12 months and won't give you cover against any new outbreak.

WHEN SHOULD I GET THE FLU VAX?

It takes around two weeks to develop immunity after receiving the vaccine, so clearly the earlier you get it on board, the more likely you are to be protected when an outbreak occurs.

DOESN'T THE FLU VAX GIVE ME THE FLU?

You can't get the flu from the flu vaccine. The virus in the vaccine is dead, so there is no chance of it making you sick. What can, and often does, happen though is that you get symptoms that show you the vaccine is working—these can include redness, or an ache around the injection site, and mild aches and fatigue. These symptoms are normal.

I'M HEALTHY, DO I REALLY NEED IT?

Being fit and healthy will not protect you from the flu. It spreads easily and even if you're super healthy, your family, friends and co-workers may not be.

THINK A CHECK OR A FLU VAX MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA?

We're offering the opportunity for you and the team to come and see us in one of the Ashburton, Methven or Rakaia Ruralco stores for a FREE blood pressure and glucose screen. Add on a flu vax and a cholesterol screen for \$25 per person (+GST). Come and join us for a cup of tea, a check on how well you are and get some protection for the upcoming flu season. If you can't make it in store, give us a call on 0800 BIZSAFE to make a time for us to come to farm.

DATES:

RURALCO ASHBURTON STORE

28th April from 9am–3pm

RURALCO METHVEN STORE

5th May from 10am–3pm

RURALCO RAKAIA STORE

28th April from 10am–3pm

Book now by calling
0800 BIZSAFE





WORDS SUPPLIED BY VTNZ

Safety first for farm vehicles

HAVING SAFE, WORKING VEHICLES ON OUR FARMS IS IMPORTANT TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY SEASON. BUT PRIORITISING THE TIME TO GET VEHICLE COMPLIANCE DONE CAN BE CHALLENGING WHEN YOU'RE JUGGLING DAILY FARM MANAGEMENT WITH PASTURE MAINTENANCE, BALING OR HARVEST PREPARATION.

by their local VTNZ inspector. Where offered, a VTNZ Machine Condition Assessment is carried out at your farm and comprises a safety check on a farm vehicle, machine or forklift. Some branches will also inspect the forks, tines and chains of forklifts. Give your local VTNZ branch a call today and check if a Machine Condition Assessment is offered in your area, and how to make a booking.

routine. This helps ensure the longevity of your equipment, saves time and money and gives you assurance your equipment is safe and ready to use when you need it. Regular upkeep can be as quick as putting the key in the ignition and turning the engine over. When carried out often, you're more likely to pick up any mechanical niggles before they become bigger issues that could delay the use of the equipment.

When to get the experts in

With farm vehicle safety under the spotlight, more farmers are choosing to get their off-road vehicles and trailers checked over at their farm

When to do it yourself

While vehicle compliance sits squarely with the safety experts, we recommend working regular preventative maintenance into your seasonal

VTNZ's top farm vehicle safety & maintenance tips:

Engines

Engines can be difficult to start/operate if they're left idle between seasons. Regular use or starting your machinery regularly will keep the engine turning over and can help reduce the risk of seizing and binding.

Mud

Prior to an inspection, check the underside of your machinery is free of mud. It will ensure the inspector can see the underside clearly and helps to protect your machinery.

Bird Nests

Check your chassis, engine and exhaust manifolds for birds' nests as these are a serious fire hazard.

Hazards

Before taking equipment into a paddock, check for rubbish or any obscured posts or structures that will damage machinery.

Rats

Check for tell-tale signs of rats in tractors. They will chew through wiring and tear off insulation which is time-consuming and expensive to replace.

Tyres

Tyres tend to lose pressure over time. Regularly check the air (or water on your tractor) to make sure levels meet manufacturers requirements. Also use this opportunity to check your tread on all vehicles. Low tyre pressure on farm vehicles can cause tyres to come off the rims and damage the tyre carcass. Over inflation speeds up wear on the tread which affects grip and increases risk of blow out.





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THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK HAS RAISED GLOBAL AWARENESS OF THE DANGERS OF VIRAL INFECTION AND WHILE SERIOUS, THE NUMBERS AFFECTED TO DATE PALE IN COMPARISON TO THE NUMBER OF HOSPITALISATIONS AND DEATHS THAT WE SEE EVERY YEAR AS A RESULT OF THE FLU.

The flu is a serious threat and it's important that we take steps now to protect our families, our colleagues and ourselves as we prepare for winter and the colds and flu's that will inevitably accompany it.

It is during Autumn and Winter that we are at our most vulnerable to the coughs, colds and flu's that at best can make a working day difficult and often result in people needing to take time off work in order to recover.

There is a lot you can do to minimise the negative effects of winter on your health and at the same time protect the productivity of your business.

Get the flu vaccine

The flu is the worst of the winter illnesses and every year results in the loss of thousands of hours that could have been spent at work, as well as the hospitalisation of thousands of people globally. It is a genuine threat to health and to business productivity.

The best available protection against the flu is the flu vaccine which is redesigned every year to protect against the most likely strains of the flu virus that you will be exposed to. This year it is a quadrivalent formula, meaning that it will protect against the four most likely strains of the disease. The flu vaccine is widely available and can be administered at your GP's surgery, usually by appointment and, also at some local pharmacies, often on a walk-in basis.

The vaccine becomes available on the 1st April 2020 and it can take up to two weeks for the vaccine to become fully effective, so the sooner you get vaccinated the better. Last year, NZ ran out of vaccines and as such we are advising our patients to ensure that they register their interest early in the season so as not to miss out.

Buccaline

As well as the flu vaccine there is another vaccine available from the pharmacy that can reduce your chance of catching the common cold. Buccaline is a tablet form vaccine, taken over three days, and is clinically proven to reduce days of illness (and days off work) during its protection period of three months on its own, but, when taken in conjunction with the flu vaccine, the combination is even more effective than either one taken in isolation.

Strengthen your immune system

In addition to the flu vaccine and taking Buccaline, there are also other things that you can do to boost your immune system and increase your chances of staying healthy through winter. It may seem obvious, but by simply getting enough sleep and eating well helps improve your bodies defences by strengthening your immune system. In addition, there are a number of supplements you can take to further strengthen your immunity and improve your chances of beating the winter bugs. We recommend the following products:

GO-Vir Defence: This contains olive leaf, Echinacea, Zinc and Vitamin C and is designed to boost your immune system against viral attack.



Nutra-life Advanced Immune: This product is based on Ester-C a longer acting, gentler version of Vitamin C and also contains Zinc, Echinacea, Zinc, olive leaf and Garlic, all of which boost the immune system.



Protect yourself, your family & your business:

Everyone has a role to play in reducing the risk of infection. In practical terms there are a number of things that you can do to help prevent the spread of winter colds and flu's:

- Wash your hands regularly or use an alcohol-based hand rub;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze;
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow if a tissue is not readily available;
- Consider wearing a mask if you suspect you or someone you know is unwell;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Don't share drinks;
- Send team members home if they are unwell in order to protect the rest of your team.

The Flu vs. the Common Cold

INFLUENZA	COMMON COLD
Sudden onset of illness. Moderate to severe illness	Mild illness
Fever (usually high)	Mild fever
Headache (may be severe)	Mild headache (congested sinuses)
Dry cough, may become moist	Sometimes a cough
Muscle aches	Muscle aches are uncommon
Shivering	A runny nose

If you think you've got the Flu

The first thing to do is make an assessment of your condition, and if in doubt, consult your local healthcare provider who has been trained to help. Your local Community Pharmacy is a good place to start. It's important not to pass off the flu as simply a bad cold given its potential to develop into other more serious illnesses such as pneumonia.

While there is no proven cure for the common cold, there are a number of products available from your community pharmacy to combat its symptoms such as pharmacist only medicines that will help manage your fever, headaches muscle pain or cough while your body gets on with the job of recovering. It is also likely that a simple anti-histamine may help dry-up your runny nose and make breathing easier.

Speak to your pharmacist

If you think that you have the flu, it is important that you consult your GP who will make an assessment and a recommendation as to the best course of action.

Wā Cups helping you get the work done



WORDS SUPPLIED BY OLIE BODY, Wā COLLECTIVE FOUNDER

YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE. YOU'VE GOT A PAIR OF OVARIES AND YOU'RE OUT AT THE BACK OF THE FARM, WRAPPED HEAD TO TOE IN OVERALLS AND WET WEATHER GEAR. LAYERS AND LAYERS OF THE STUFF.

Your period strikes. No loo. Twenty layers of muddy clothing to take off. Nowhere to change a menstrual product and certainly nowhere to put it and Poppy the dog is no help either.

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Wā Collective have developed their own plastic free reusable menstrual cup. It replaces the need for tampons and pads and holds three times more. This means that wet weather gear can be kept on and life can be continued without period interruption! Across the board, the feedback has been, 'I just wish I'd heard of these sooner'. One Wā Cup replaces around 2,500 disposables over its 10 year lifespan.

Since launching, Wā Collective has prevented 2.4 million disposables from entering landfill, saving people over \$810,000. Every Wā Menstrual Cup sold subsidises one for someone in need throughout Aotearoa too.

Wā Collective's founder Olie Body, an Obama Foundation Leader, Edmund Hillary Fellow, Entrepreneur of the Year finalist and TEDx Speaker certainly wishes she'd had a Wā Cup when she was in the thick of calving season a few years back. 'A bloody game changer that would have been'.

Wā Cups are sold in retail stores throughout NZ and on Wā Collective's website.

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thank you

A guide to autumn layering



WORDS SUPPLIED BY BIBI MABER, BODY POSITIVE PERSONAL STYLIST
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IT'S ALWAYS SAD TO LET GO OF THE SUMMER SEASON, BUT I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I WASN'T EXCITED ABOUT AUTUMN AND ALL THE FASHION AND STYLES THAT ARE AVAILABLE. WE'RE TALKING LAYERS OF TIGHTS, SWEATERS, BOOTS, JACKETS AND VESTS IN RICH COLOURS AND TEXTURES LIKE VELVET, FAUX LEATHER, FAUX FUR, LACE DETAILS AND CHUNKY KNITS... I COULD GO ON... BUT WAIT, DID YOU FLINCH WHEN YOU READ THE WORD "LAYERS" BY ANY CHANCE?



A 13 piece capsule wardrobe tailored with versatile pieces perfect for layering this Autumn season. I've come up with 20+ outfit combos. How about you?

Many women are hesitant about layering their clothing out of fear of overheating or looking too bulky and disproportionate—and I can understand that. Not every piece of clothing is meant to be layered together. I'd like to share some ideas that will help you feel inspired, find warmth and comfort, and add visual appeal.

1. Don't be afraid to transition your favourite summer dresses into autumn by pairing them with tights and a pair of knee-high boots. You can add a long sleeve top or bodysuit underneath and then top it with a cropped jacket or blazer for an extra layer of warmth and style.
2. Polo necks are a great staple to have in your wardrobe for the cooler seasons. As above, you can layer them under sleeveless dresses and singlets, also sweaters, jackets, cardis and vests. If you have a fuller bustline, you may tend to avoid them because they can emphasise those particular curves even more. What you can do, is wear a blazer or a vest to help break up that horizontal line across your chest. The new lines of the topper over the polo neck will create three vertical slices that will visually lengthen your look. Try it out!
3. Wearing textured blazers, jackets and coats over shirts, dresses and sweaters will instantly upgrade your outfit. The key is to select the right weight of fabric, a good neutral colour and ensure the fit is perfect for your body shape.
4. To add more of a chic vibe to your style, wear an enhanced neutral (like a rusty orange or sage green) in a monochromatic look. Try layering different textures all in the same shade, or layer the same fabrics in different shades of the same colour.



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A passion for alpaca

What started out as a fleeting comment has grown into fledgling business for a Selwyn couple determined to enlighten others to the wonders of alpaca farming.

When Richard and Rebecca Moir of Beckerich Alpacas purchased their first alpaca they never planned on getting into the South American native on a large scale, but five soon became 12. Five years on, they now have a herd of almost 30. They're hooked. They not only enjoy breeding, handling and showing alpaca, but as attitudes change toward using natural fibers, they can see a huge future in their fleece.

Originally hailing from Jersey in the Channel Islands, Rebecca met Kiwi-boy Richard when he was on his big OE. "Richard and my brother worked for Honda UK and formed a friendship when they met at a top performer event in Mauritius. We met on Christmas Day and the rest is history," laughs Rebecca.

After getting married, the Moirs always intended to return to New Zealand. They made the move to Canterbury in July 2012, initially living in the city. Rebecca worked as a Dental Assistant, enjoying working with children and educating them about oral health. Richard initially transferred into a private banking role before taking up his current position as an Investment Adviser at Craigs Investment Partners, who has just come onboard as one of Ruralco's Card Supplier partners.

A horse-mad teen, Rebecca fell in love with alpacas from the moment she first saw them. But it was only after they purchased a 4.5ha lifestyle block just north of Rolleston, that the question of buying their own alpaca came up. "Richard took me to meet an alpaca breeder on one of my first visits to New Zealand. As soon as I hugged one, I knew I wanted to have one of my own one day. The breeder said she'd set me up with my first alpaca when we returned to New Zealand and had our own lifestyle block. It was just a passing comment, but it all happened like it was meant to be," explains Rebecca.

Having spotted an advertisement on TradeMe, Richard and Rebecca visited a local breeder. Ironically, it was the same breeder they had met years earlier. Initially, Richard agreed Rebecca could purchase two, but the woman was selling a family of five and wanted them to go as a group. Knowing Rebecca's love for them, Richard relented. "What's five," he smiles.

Little did he know, that it was just the beginning. Now he is just as passionate about them as she is.

Alpacas are a member of the camelid family which includes the llama, and huacaya (pronounced wuh-kai-ya) alpaca, the wild

vicuna and guanaco, and the camel. They originate from the high Andean Plateau and mountains of South America at an altitude of 3,500 to 5,000 metres above sea level. It's believed they have evolved from the wild vicuna.

Domesticated for more than 6,000 years, alpacas were highly prized by the Incas for their soft and luxurious fleece, which was known as 'fibre of the gods'. The Spanish invasion of 1532AD caused widespread chaos and destruction, resulting in disease wiping out a large number of the indigenous Indian population, which together with the slaughter of alpaca to make way for sheep and cattle, led to centuries of careful breeding being lost forever. Pushed high up into the mountains, alpaca and llama were left to interbreed.

Despite attempts to export alpaca out of South America following the Spanish

invasion, it wasn't until English wool merchant Sir Titus Salt started importing alpaca fleece to England in 1836 that interest was reignited. In an attempt to safeguard their own industries, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina put a ban on live export of alpaca and unprocessed alpaca fibre in the 1840s. Chile didn't support the ban until 1930. Interestingly, the first alpaca were imported to New Zealand in the 1840s. The herd was part of a large herd of alpaca shipped to Australia in 1858 by Charles Ledger under orders from the Governor of New South Wales. Of the 336 animals, only 276 survived the journey from Chile to Australia. Many of those that landed in New Zealand ended up on the property of George Rhodes of Purau in Lyttelton. Neither

BELOW: The most recent addition to the Moir's alpaca herd

OPPOSITE: Richard and Rebecca with daughter Willow





LEFT: The Moir's have also recently taken on organising the alpaca section of this year's Ellesmere A&P Show

country was successful in getting the alpaca industry up and running at that time.

It was more than 140 years before Taupo's Ian Nelson paved the way for breeders and businesses to import alpaca direct from Chile having finally got the Minister of Agriculture to change the status of alpaca and llama from zoo animal to farm animal. Two alpaca and three llamas arrived in 1986 from Chester Zoo in England, kicking off the fledgling industry. Many large importations followed, but getting alpacas and llama established in New Zealand wasn't without its complications.

Today, there are almost 30,000 alpaca in New Zealand. About three-quarters are breeding animals, registered with the Alpaca Association New Zealand, but there are thousands more unregistered animals kept as pets. There are two kinds of alpaca—huacaya are the woolly ones that look like a sheep with long necks; whereas the rare, suri, have fibre that hangs in long, separate, distinctive pencil locks. About 90 per cent of the alpaca population in New Zealand are huacaya. Nationwide, there are few alpaca breeders

doing it on a large scale, most have herds of less than 40. Like Rebecca and Richard, many started off with a just a couple, and before long found their numbers have multiplied. "There was really no plan at the beginning," explains Rebecca. "It just grew."

Having started with five girls and one pet boy, next minute Rebecca was embarking on her own breeding programme after a retiring breeder offered her shares in an Australian imported stud male (macho). That was quickly followed by the purchase of two more well-bred girls from another breeder.

Rebecca admits they knew little in the beginning, but her previous experience with horses put her in good stead. Compared to other animals, alpaca are relatively easy-care, she says. "They are intelligent, easy to manage and have a light environmental footprint."

Aside from yearly shearing (which they get contractors in for) in spring to early summer to help keep the animals cool, alpaca require twice-yearly injections of A, D and E, an annual five-in-one, drench two times a year and need their hooves trimmed regularly. Curiously, alpacas don't absorb vitamin D

from sunlight. Unlike sheep, they do not require crutching and aren't susceptible to flystrike or foot rot. Although they're quite hardy creatures, they're also renowned for being stoic animals, which at times can disguise diseases.

On average alpaca live to about 20 years of age. While they are often confused with llama, alpacas are about half the size weighing in at about 70kg versus 150kg for a llama. They are also shorter. Llamas have banana-shaped ears, and have a longer face, almost kangaroo-like, whereas an alpaca's ears are more spear-shaped and their face is more that of a teddy bear.

Rebecca finds working with alpacas is quite calming. "There is a definite feel-good factor. They have more of a character. Each individual is different. They are kind and gentle. They will come for a cuddle, you can lead them and they will eat out of your hand. They are willing and very trainable. Even the youngest cria come to their names when called."

As alpacas are one of the most efficient converters of grass into protein, she says you don't need to supplement their feed if you have adequate access to good grass. However, because of their high numbers on a smallish area, they feed additional lucern chaff during the summer dry mainly for those expectant females.

Alpacas also have a tendency to leave a large poo pile on the grass in one area so they don't excrete all over the paddock, meaning they don't usually come into contact with their own worms unless they're heavily stocked.

Early in the piece, the Moirs joined the Alpaca Association New Zealand. They found the association a great source of information, especially with regards to showing and learning about the alpaca fleece.

While showing is not everyone's cup of tea, Rebecca says it's a great way to find out what calibre of animals you have and where improvements are needed. Unlike the horse and cattle sections, where people spend literally hours washing, primping and painting oil on hooves, showing alpaca is quite simple in terms of preparation.

"We are enjoying showing our animals and meeting the other alpaca breeders. It's quite social. The critique from the judges can be invaluable. You not only learn about what you have but also where your breeding programme is heading. It's not always the same judges, there is a huge pool of people from all over New Zealand."

From those early critiques, the Moirs narrowed their breeding programme, focussing on enhancing their fleeces, without sacrificing good conformation, strong bone, and mothering abilities. "We really put the

money into genetics to improve the fleece. We are trying to breed for fineness and density. We are not 100 per cent there yet, but we're working on it. There is always room for improvement on the fleece."

With natural fibres being increasingly recognised as a favourable substitute to plastics, Rebecca sees a huge future for alpaca fleece.

Alpaca is softer and less greasy than wool. With less lanolin than wool it is hypoallergenic (it can be worn next to the skin, even in babies, without irritation). It is finer than most cross-bred wool and on par with merino for fineness, and the hollow fibre traps the air, giving it superior warmth properties and it is fire retardant. Huacaya fibre is spun, carded, dyed and either woven, knitted into woollen garments or felted, while second-grade fibre can even be made into duvet covers or quilts. Suri fibre is generally woven and made into fine cloth for the fashion industry.

It's sorted by its width in microns. Generally the darker the colour of the animal, the higher the micron. Traditionally, white animals have the finest fleeces. The colour range is extensive with 24 different natural colours, from white through fawn, to brown, black and grey, explains Rebecca.

As the New Zealand herd is quite small, breeders have the option of selling their fleeces locally or pooling their fibre and selling it through Pacific Alpacas, where the fibre is sorted, soured and sold to domestic and international buyers. While it can take up to a year to receive a cheque through Pacific Alpacas, Rebecca says the higher prices make it worthwhile. "We can get between three and four times the return to what we would get in New Zealand. In my mind, it makes it worthwhile. We can get anywhere from \$24 to \$34 per kilo. On average each alpaca is producing about 10kg." It's a far cry from 10



ABOVE: Compared to other animals, alpaca are relatively easy-care, "they are intelligent, easy to manage and have a light environmental footprint."
BELOW LEFT: Rebecca's goal is to breed quality coloured alpaca with a superior fleece

years ago when it was costing alpaca farmers more to shear their animals than the fleece was worth.

But while the Moirs have certainly made some headway in their breeding programme, making those big genetic gains is difficult with small numbers, given an alpacas gestation is 11 and a half months.

The most cria the Moirs have bred in a single season is six. And even then, it's not an exact science. Like other camelids, alpaca are induced ovulators. They do not have a regular oestrous cycle, like sheep for example, but ovulate after mating with a male. Paddock mating is more convenient, but the Moirs prefer the control of a penned mating, so they know the exact dates they are looking at. Mating an alpaca can be quite entertaining, explains Rebecca. It often starts with a non-pregnant female sitting down in readiness when a macho is nearby. The male starts oging (singing) to the female which induces ovulation. The whole mating can last between 30-40 minutes.

Two weeks after mating the female is reintroduced to the macho, known as "spitting them off". If the female has fallen pregnant when the male is reintroduced to her she will spit at him. This process is repeated again at four and six weeks. A scan is performed within 90 days to confirm.

Usually, two times is enough, says Rebecca. If for some reason the female alpaca hasn't fallen pregnant, she might seek help from the vet to see if there's something else going on or mate her with a different male.

Like other prey animals, baby cria are sitting on their haunches and attempting to stand within an hour of being born. They usually give birth (called unpacking) between the hours of 6 am and 3 pm and weigh between 5-8 kg. Rebecca is usually on hand to lend a hand if needed. She handles the cria from birth. When they're about six months old she starts halter-training them. All of their

progeny are halter-trained even if they aren't going to be shown.

The Moirs currently have two un-related stud males (macho)—Newpark Pedro and Belise Aramis. They purchased Belise Aramis, who hails from New Zealand's only dedicated black alpaca stud, Belise Alpacas in North Canterbury, with the specific purpose of breeding dark brown and grey alpaca. By the Australian-bred Warramunga Downs Kalarni out of Jolimont Macee, Belise Aramis brings great handle and density of fleece packed on a typically robust frame.

But more importantly, he carries dominant colour. "My passion is coloured animals," explains Rebecca. "Grey is recessive in alpaca and that poses some challenges. To get dark browns and greys, you need black animals. You can plan for the colour that you prefer but it doesn't always go your way."

Long-term Rebecca's goal is to breed quality coloured alpaca with a superior fleece, but admittedly, they still have some way to go. With the arrival of baby Willow six months ago, their alpaca breeding programme has slowed while Rebecca focuses on being a new mum herself. This season they only have three cria due and have mated just three for the coming season.

Until now, the Moirs have not sold any progeny in favour of building up their herd, but that's the next logical step. "We have invested quite a bit of money into our alpaca. We are just in the process of looking to sell our pet boys and will certainly look at selling some of our girls in the future. It's quite an exciting time for us."

The couple has also recently taken on organising the alpaca section of this year's Ellesmere A&P Show.



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Retracting resignations

What happens when your employee wants to retract their resignation?

WORDS SUPPLIED BY ARGYLE WELSH FINNIGAN

People can sometimes say things in the heat of the moment which, on reflection, they didn't really mean. What happens when your employee quits suddenly, perhaps by storming out of your workplace as a result of a disagreement? Is this as a resignation? What happens if your employee has a change of heart and wants to return to work?

Most employment agreements will provide a notice period that any employee must give when they want to end their employment. Sometimes, however, your employee may quit without giving any notice. This often happens after a disagreement between an employer and employee or perhaps a stressed employee reaches 'breaking point' and decides they can't work another day in the role.

Sometimes your employee's words and intentions are clear. They may actually say "I quit". Sometimes, however, the situation is not so clear. What if your employee says, "I can't take this anymore, I'm leaving" and walks out? Is that a resignation?

What is their real intention?

For an employee to resign, they must unequivocally convey an intention to end their employment. Being absent from work briefly without explanation, or walking away to cool off, will generally not amount to a resignation. If there is any doubt as to the intention conveyed, you should be cautious before acting on an apparent resignation.

In the situation where they walk out, they may have intended to simply take the rest of the day off (rightly or wrongly) and return to work the next day. The easiest way to remove any doubt is to ask them. That is not always immediately possible, of course. But you should follow up with your employee at an appropriate time, after they have had a chance to calm down.

Can your employee retract their 'resignation' and return to work after a cooling off period?

If your employee has resigned, they cannot retract the resignation unless you agree. Employment law, however, acknowledges that sometimes unclear resignations are not truly intended by your employee. Such resignations are often given in stressful situations such as those mentioned. Because of this, employees are entitled to a brief 'cooling-off' period to allow them to think about what they really want to do. You would be obliged to allow your employee to return to work if they changed their mind within a short period. If you don't accept your employee returning to work, your employee could have grounds to raise a personal grievance for unjustified dismissal.

Employees changing their minds

Employees who change their minds following a resignation in haste should not delay. If they did not intend to resign in the first place, then they should also immediately

let their employer know. Not acting promptly could mean it is too late to return to work.

How long can an employee have for cooling off? That will depend on the particular circumstances, but at least 24 hours should be allowed.

Our tips

If you have stormed off, or employ someone who has done this, then we suggest that:

- Consider what was said. Was it definitely a resignation, or something less?
- After an appropriate cooling-off period, if your employee has not made contact you should attempt to contact them to check on their intentions. Your employee should notify you as soon as they think they may wish to return, and
- If you cannot reach your employee after the cooling-off period, write to them recording their resignation and details of the end of their employment.

If you are faced with a change of heart, whether your own or from one of your employees, and you are unsure how to proceed, we have experts who can help.

This article is an excerpt from an article originally published in the NZ Law Limited Summer Property Speaking Newsletter. Please remember this information is designed as a general guide and should not replace specific legal advice.

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Ruralco steps up for world leading Lincoln workshop

Farmers keen to get a better understanding of the global challenges facing pasture farming have the opportunity to learn from some of the world's best minds at Lincoln University's inaugural "Grazing in future multi-scapes" workshop. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

The workshop will be running from December 1–4 at Lincoln University. Ruralco Chief Executive Rob Sharkie said the co-operative is excited to be a platinum sponsor for an event that promises to bring together some of the world's thought leaders from urban, food, social and environmental backgrounds.

"We are all very aware of the challenges facing pastoral farming and agricultural systems today, but also know New Zealand's approach to free range, outdoor pastoral systems sets a benchmark for others to learn from, and this is also forum for introducing new approaches," says Rob.

"It is a fantastic opportunity for Ruralco to be involved in bringing together an excellent forum of international multi-disciplinary speakers, leaders and thinkers who would normally be difficult to attract, and expensive to solicit by ourselves," he says. The workshop intends to offer insights from experts in the many aspects or "scapes" related to grazing, ranging from society, landscapes, health and future thinking for pastoral systems.

"It is a fantastic opportunity for Ruralco to be involved in bringing together an excellent forum of international multi-disciplinary speakers, leaders and thinkers who would normally be difficult to attract..."

"This is the opportunity to bring people together who are top notch pastoral leaders and academics from around the world, covering multiple disciplines to reflect on current issues and future alternatives for pastoral systems," says Conference Chair Professor Pablo Gregorini, head of Lincoln University Centre of Excellence. He says there is no other scientific convention in the world offering the breadth of topic coverage.

"It is no secret land users, policy makers and societies are calling for alternative approaches to pastoral systems and other agricultural practices. There needs to be

a paradigm shift in pastoral production systems and how grazing livestock are managed and grazed within them."

The workshop will extend over four days and aims to include a farmer forum on site around Canterbury farms.

"We are welcoming Ruralco members in particular, many who may be Lincoln graduates," says Pablo.

"Professor Gregorini said Lincoln University was an ideal venue as the academic heart of New Zealand agriculture, and linking with Ruralco helps bring the findings of the workshop direct to the people who need it the most, New Zealand farmers."

Professor Gregorini said Lincoln University was an ideal venue as the academic heart of New Zealand agriculture, and linking with Ruralco helps bring the findings of the workshop direct to the people who need it the most, New Zealand farmers.

The workshop conference will play host to some of the world's leading thinkers in all aspects of modern pastoral farming and agricultural systems.

Rob Sharkie says Ruralco is looking forward to sponsoring a workshop so attuned to Ruralco's own values and commitment to supporting a sustainable New Zealand farming industry.

He welcomes the opportunity to help expose future thinking to Ruralco members and people associated with agriculture's future in New Zealand.

"With pressure building as an industry and as an agriculturally based economy we cannot ignore issues around land, climate water and environment."

Anyone interested in attending the workshop can find out more by contacting:

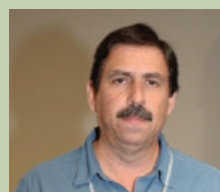
Rebecca Peterson
Tel +6434230544
rebecca.peterson@lincoln.ac.nz



Introducing Professor Fred Provenza

Leading the "thought-scape" aspect of the conference is Professor Fred Provenza. As emeritus professor at the International Agricultural Centre at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, his focus is on sustainability of farming practices around the world in developing and developed countries.

He will be providing insights on the collapse of chaos and complexity in current and future pastoralism.



Introducing Professor Paulo Carvalho

Professor Paulo Carvalho of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation plant production division will also be presenting on the "landscapes" aspects of pastoral farming.

He is also president of the Brazilian Society of Animal Production, and brings extensive knowledge on how to co-ordinate grazing programmes with crop systems to ensure lower carbon emissions. He will be providing insights on the challenges and opportunities that exist to capture lower carbon opportunities in pastoral systems.

Community partnership keeps on giving



The true success of the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge is the community partnership between organisers Longbeach School and the Hinds and Districts Lions Club. Since 2007, with the solid support of many long-term sponsors, the event has raised over \$275,000—all of it to benefit the people of Mid Canterbury.

The Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge is a mountain biking, running and walking event held once a year in rural Mid Canterbury. The event is situated in the central zone of the Canterbury Bight and with endless views of the Pacific Ocean, it is a once-a-year opportunity to mountain bike, run or walk along a spectacular section of Canterbury coastline.

The objective of the event is to raise funds for the local Longbeach Primary School and the Hinds and Districts Lions Club—who distribute profits to charitable causes which benefit the community of Canterbury. The two distinct groups, namely the Hinds and Districts Lions Club and the teachers and parents of Longbeach School, have worked seamlessly together for the past 14 years to host, promote and manage this fundraising event.

The event is run entirely by passionate volunteers and it caters from elite sports people, fast-paced competitive athletes, have-a-go weekend riders and recreational runners through to families, and children as young as six. Over the years the course has changed a few times, but the current course starts and finishes at the historic Longbeach Estate. Support from landowners—the Thomas and McKenzie families has been paramount to the success of this event. These farmers literally throw open their gates for the event course and allow access to their paddocks, laneways and boundaries.

After so many events, the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge has become a mainstay of the Mid Canterbury events calendar and it attracts participants from across the Canterbury region and wider afield.

The back story: he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

In the mid-2000s, Colin Fleming, a local farmer and Hinds and Districts Lions Club member had an idea to run a horse event like what would have been run at the Longbeach Estate 150 years ago. Mr Fleming approached Bill and Penny Thomas to see if they would be prepared to host this fund-raising event along the picturesque pacific coastline. After discussion about the logistics of horses and potentially motorbikes it was decided that a mountain bike race would be a better fit and would enable more people to attend. Bill then requested that he would do it only if

Longbeach School were involved and were a part recipient of the fundraising. From there Bill and Colin approached Longbeach Estate's two coastal neighbours who were only too happy to join in and make the course a reality.

Mr Fleming then approached Longbeach School and met with the School Fundraising Committee of the time, which consisted of Donald Sutton, Simon Eddington, Fleur Schmack and Jo Taylor. "We attended that first meeting and decided right from the start it was a 50/50 partnership—the Lions did the track and marshalling, and the School managed the entries and marketing with a 50/50 distribution of the fundraising at the end" said founding committee member and past Chairwoman, Jo Taylor.

The 50/50 partnership was established and is reflected not only in the split of fundraising, but in the division of jobs, participation on the organising committee and rotation of the Chairpersons. Past Chairs of the event include



Bob Ellis, Paul Taylor, John Lowe, Jo Taylor and Garry Brown.

"As the event grew—building a bigger team to split our jobs was necessary. Registration and promotion became two roles, the introduction of electronic timing was amazing—prior to this we had three people with stop watches at the finish line. The event ran on the smell of an oily rag so that we could put more money back into the community—that was the heart of every decision" said Jo.

In 2007 the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge began with 259 competitors. Since then it has gone from strength to strength, reaching over 1,400 at the ten-year anniversary. In 2019 the event attracted over 750 competitors and raised \$22,000 for distribution. Many locals are charmed by this event and return year after year—to try a new course; to challenge themselves; to better a previous time or to enjoy a day of community spirit and a delicious steak sandwich (post-race of course!). A special mention must also be made of Bernard Davidson, who for many years was the voice of the finish line at this event. Mr Davidson was on hand with a bit of good banter at the finish and always assisted keep the day on track as MC.

Today the event consists of six classes: mountain biking—the 35km Classic or 23km

Recreational ride, 12km family ride and running 21km off-road half marathon; and run / walking a 12km or 5km course.

Historic estate and local farmers open their gates

Landowners Bill and Penny Thomas were in favour of the event since its inception, and Bill recounts "on the last Sunday in November 2007, I, along with about 250 other mainly locals; somewhat unfit for mountain biking and with no training, competing on our children's old bikes, rolled up to the start line of the inaugural event. None of us really knew what a mountain bike was and how much of a challenge we would be undertaking."

"The Hinds Lions and Longbeach School community put a tremendous amount of work into what has become a very enjoyable annual event. The highlights for me and our family is seeing many people from all over entering, enjoying (mostly) and returning to do the

ABOVE: For the past three years, significant donations have gone towards the Maia Health Foundation who raised funds for the roof-top helipad at Christchurch Hospital. Photo courtesy of the Maia Health Foundation

OPPOSITE: Commonwealth Gold Medallist and World Junior cross-country mountain biker Anton Cooper

event. Having world renowned medal winning mountain biker Anton Cooper hold the 35km record and returning regularly is one of the bonuses" Bill said.

"Coming across friends, neighbours, even our accountant and bank manager (the BNZ along with Ruralco have sponsored the event since day one) makes it a great opportunity to catch up and compete together. In 2019, three generations of our family—including Penny and I along with our children, daughter and son in law, son and daughter in law, grandchildren and extended family all competing in the Challenge was a special occasion for us. For the first time we were able to put in a Longbeach Estate Team for the 35km mountain bike—we didn't take the trophy home, but there's always next year!" Bill believes the event brings out the best in people. "Whether its family members, local community or people from outside the district as well as the local business supporting and competing, the young, old and older get out of the house away from phones and screens. The open air, shingle tracks, paddocks, gullies,

dongas and through water ways and across the river, sees people being active for several hours. If you haven't entered or attended, I think you should, you will enjoy yourself," he said.

Sponsors make the day

The partnership with Ruralco (previously ATS) was unique right from the beginning. The then Marketing Manager, James Smith, saw the vision of the event straight away and brought ATS on board as the naming sponsor. The BNZ have also been a great supporter and sponsor from the start. Alongside financial sponsorship of the event, many sponsors pay the entry for their staff to participate and encourage their employees to enter the Teams events, some putting together very competitive teams.

One naming sponsor, 12 Gold Sponsors, 14 Silver Sponsors and nine Bronze Sponsors ensure that the organising committee can help keep operational costs as low as possible. On event day the site is filled with sponsors marquees and tents and the finish line is proudly lined with flags of these sponsors.

To ensure maximum profitably, the organising committee aims to use sponsorship funding for the operational costs of the event, enabling as much of the event registration fees to be returned to the community.

One hundred+ volunteers

Current Chairman, Matt Galbraith is the father of two ex-Longbeach students Connor, Keely

and of current Year 4 student Ryan. Matt and wife Wendy are both great runners and mountain bikers and the children are now making it hard work for Matt to get over the finish line before them. He has been involved with the event since 2014, taking over the running of the Event Site in 2015 and coming on as Chairman in 2019.

The once a year event is put together by a team of over 100 volunteers made up of parents, teachers and families of the school, the Lions club members and in many cases their spouses plus local community volunteers, who without their support, the event would simply not be possible. These volunteers ensure that we have an organising committee, marshals out on the track, first-aid teams in addition to St John Ambulance volunteers, help with everything from chopping onions, to handing out race numbers, marshalling on the track, BBQ-ing, setting up and packing down marquees, directing cars in the carpark and transporting the port-a-loos.

"This is a special event to be a part of and I'm certainly proud of the amazing team that helps deliver this fantastic challenge each year. It is immensely satisfying to see how months of hard work by so many people comes together on the day. We look forward to seeing you all back in 2020," Matt said.

Event highlights

Many memorable moments have been created because of this event. From the personal triumphs of participants completing

their first race, to whole families getting the chance to complete the challenge together to the unique opportunity to line up with Commonwealth Gold Medallist and World Junior cross-country mountain biker Anton Cooper. Anton first attended the event as a 13-year old and has participated in most events since. Four years ago, Anton turned professional and in spite of this, he continues to attend the event when his schedule allows.

In 2013 the event, then known as the ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge, won the regional Trustpower Community Award. This was a huge recognition of the team's hard work, many hours of unsung effort and excellent fundraising results.

One year the whole of Years 5 and 6 from Tinwald School participated in the event. Chairwoman at the time Mrs Taylor said "every morning on my way to town I would see these kids—of every size and shape—training for the event. Running around the block and getting ready for the race. It was fantastic to see them come over the finish line, each of them proud of their achievement."

Passing 1,000 competitors was an achievement and then making it to the 10-year anniversary, where a special commemorative medal was handed out to over 1,400 participants. The event has created many highlights for both participants and the organising committees.

BELOW: The new Longbeach School Senior Playground currently under construction, made possible by funds raised from the event



Doing good things

The funds raised from this event, more than \$275,000 since the inception, have given both organisations a huge boost.

The event has become one of the main sources of funds for the Hinds and District Lions Club. Lions member and Past Chairman Garry Brown said “the support and participation we get from our members and their partners is outstanding. Our members have got a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction from the club’s principal role of track preparation over the years the event has been running. This is ongoing with most of the work done in the spring—which can be challenging given the variable weather conditions we strike year on year. It’s great to be down on the coast putting our thinking caps on to overcome any of the multitude of issues that may arise.”

For the Lions the funds raised have been spent on supporting of youth in our community, developing the playground in the Hinds Domain and for the last three years, significant donations to the Maia Health Foundation. This Foundation has raised funds for a roof-top helipad at Christchurch Hospital, which will eliminate the transit between the Hagley Park helipad and the hospital. The Lions have indicated a commitment to continue their support of Maia whose future projects involve enhancing children’s facilities for the hospital and providing parent beds for the paediatric ward.

The Longbeach School have invested money directly into the school, helping to ensure that there are as few barriers to education as possible. Proceeds from this event help provide extra support for students by allowing the school to employ teacher aides. Teacher aides not only help those students who find learning a challenge but also assist those students who require extension. Other areas of the school which have benefited include the purchase of additional educational resources, a volley wall, mathematics equipment, funding to support student leadership courses, and currently assisting with the construction of a new senior playground.

Post the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, the event committee wanted to do something to help a primary school in Christchurch which had been badly affected. As a decile 2 school, Central New Brighton School was identified as needing help. This school had a very low socio-economic group of students and little in the way of resources to help them get back on their feet.

The committee volunteered to help Central New Brighton in some unique ways. Firstly, they got the school resource room functional again—it had been left in a big mess after the earthquakes with maths and teaching resources just been pushed into a corner. Over the summer the committee helped to clear the playground, repainted climbing equipment and spent \$5000 of raised funds on purchasing the school stationery requirements for every child at the school.



ABOVE: Longbeach School student Angus Lovett competing in the 2019 event

Future fit—fantastic foundations

The impact of the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge has a reach far and wide. From a 13 year old Anton Cooper lining up at the start of what has become a professional mountain biking career, to supporting youth with tools and resources for their learning, helping an earthquake damaged school, building a community playground and assisting with the funding of a roof top helipad, no other event in this district has the positive community impact that this does.

The unique partnership between a school and service club, the landowners, sponsors and competitors make the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge a special event. The founders of this event have laid solid foundations and the future of this community event looks bright. Motivated by personal achievement or a duty of community service the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge continues to bring out the best in our people, for the good of our community.

The numbers

WHAT:

Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge

WHEN:

Last Sunday in November since 2007

NEXT EVENT:

Sunday 29 November 2020

FUNDRAISING:

Over \$275,000

TOTAL NUMBER OF ENTRIES:

10,370

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS/EVENT:

Over 100

EVENTS:

Mountain Bike—35km, 23km or 12km

Off-road run—21km, 12km, 5km

Walk—12km, 5km

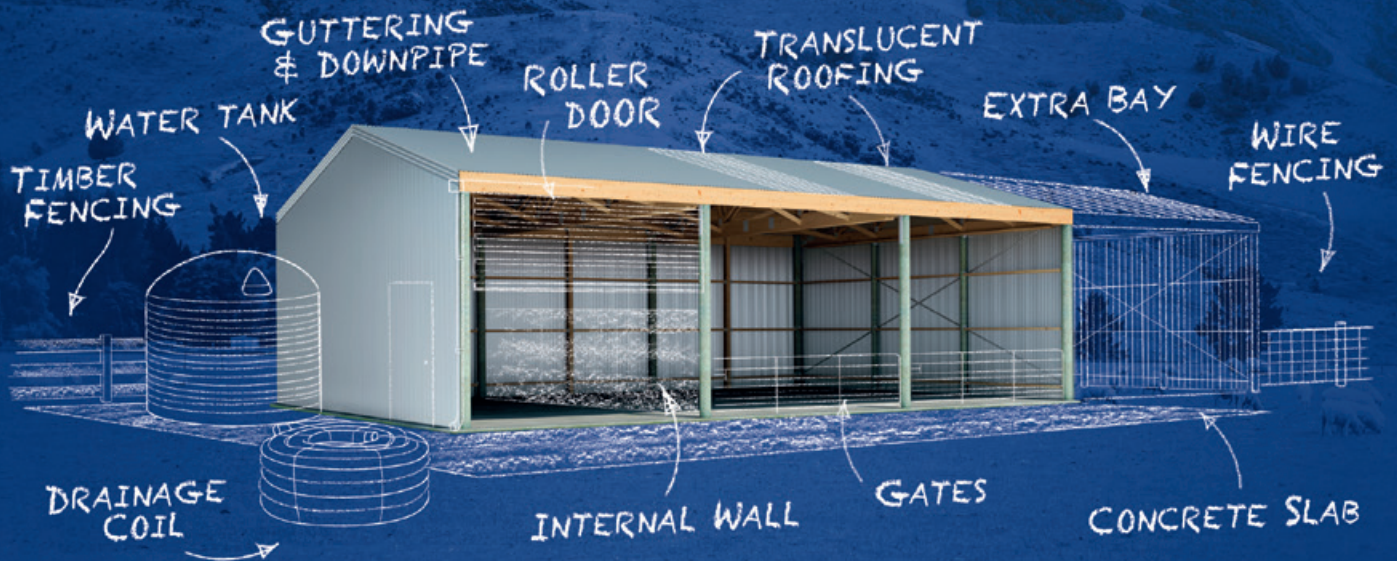
Teams race for 35km and 23km mountain bike.

TO ENTER:

Entries open From 1 July 2020 online at www.longbeachcoastalchallenge.com

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People and the environment a focus in Canterbury for 2020 and beyond

At DairyNZ, the 2020 year is off to a busy start, as we continue to work on a range of activities and projects to support farmers.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLY BY TONY FINCH, DAIRYNZ SOUTH ISLAND HEAD

Our work in Canterbury is guided by our regional plan which was developed with input from farmers. The plan identified key priority areas for DairyNZ to focus on: protecting the environment and improving how dairy is viewed by the public, while building resilient farms; and attracting and maintaining a skilled dairy workforce.

These focus areas have guided the development of regional projects such as the Selwyn Hinds project. This involves

working with 50 partner farms across Selwyn and Hinds to identify options farmers can adopt to reduce their nitrogen losses and continue to farm successfully. Each farm is choosing options that fit best with their goals and farm system. We have seen farms adjust their use of irrigation, incorporate plantain or catch crops into their farming system, and change the timing of their fertiliser applications. There's also a range of other changes happening on-farm.

What's been really pleasing is that through hosting field days and discussion group sessions, as well as events for rural professionals, the innovation happening on partner farms is being shared with farms right across Selwyn and Hinds. The changes taking place on farms are also able to be adopted in areas across Canterbury and

into other regions of New Zealand where farms want to reduce their nitrogen losses. As this project continues, we plan to keep supporting partner farms to continue sharing their knowledge and practical advice with other farmers.

The project team who worked on our long-running FRNL (Forages for Reduced Nitrate Leaching) programme were delighted to receive a significant achievement award for their work recently. Over 100 people across several organisations, and ten commercial farms were involved in this project trialling different crops with the aim to reduce nitrate leaching. The research from this programme has been shared widely at field days and conferences, and many farmers have been following the programme and incorporating forage crops into their farm



LEFT: DairyNZ's recent People Expo in Dunsandel included a series of workshops for farm teams
 OPPOSITE: Farmers in Selwyn and Hinds had the opportunity to hear how other farms are reducing their nitrogen losses at a recent DairyNZ field day

system. Today, the options trialled through the programme are being used on farms as part of the Selwyn Hinds project. FRNL is one of DairyNZ's many levy funded research programmes which are now being applied on farms to achieve real world goals.

We know that the proposals in the Essential Freshwater package have been a major concern for many farmers in Canterbury and nationally. DairyNZ spent a huge amount of time late last year working on a submission on behalf of all dairy farmers, and we really appreciated the time farmers invested into making sure their voices were heard. With more than 17,000 submissions received on the proposals - many of which are from farmers - we know that the government received a clear message about the concerns you have. We are continuing to work on your behalf on this issue, and on finding practical solutions to meet changing regulations that can be implemented on-farm.

A major challenge for Canterbury farmers continues to be attracting and retaining capable farm staff. We have a very tight labour supply market across greater Canterbury with unemployment levels at around 2% in many areas. To access employees, many farmers are relying on using experienced migrant workers.

DairyNZ has been undertaking a lot of work over the past year with the government and ImmigrationNZ to highlight the urgent need we have in Canterbury for migrant workers to fill places on farm.

We are pleased that the government has recognised the need for change. From June 2020, a range of changes will start being introduced. ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) will be removed and hourly wages will be used as a proxy for skill level. Above \$25.50 per hour will be recognised as higher skilled - below this is lower skilled. All migrants on employer assisted visas will be able to bring their families, who can then apply for a work visa in their own right. Another significant win is that in lower labour supply regions, including Canterbury (outside Christchurch), lower skilled visas can be for up to three years. This will help employers and migrants make future plans with greater certainty. You can read more about the changes to temporary visas online at www.immigration.govt.nz/work-visa-changes

In February, we held a People Expo for farmers and farm staff in Dunsandel. We hosted a series of workshops on how to achieve greater independence, efficiency

and cohesion amongst farm teams. This was very well received by farmers. The Expo also saw the launch of a new 'Good Boss' campaign. This aims to share knowledge about what makes a good boss. It also acknowledges that we all have something to learn and provides farmers with tools and resources they can use to assess how they are doing and how they can become a better boss.

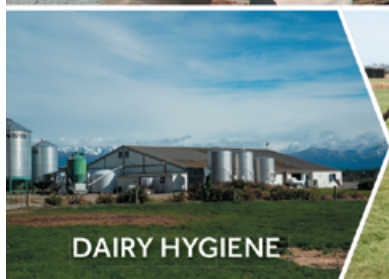
In March, we hosted our Canterbury Farmers' Forum near Lincoln and presented new research on the use of flexible milking. While the project is only in its early stages, the results from a Lincoln University Research Dairy Farm have been exciting. We are already seeing some farms shift to 'three in two' milking for part of the season. The early results from the project indicate that the shift may be able to occur earlier in the season - or for the whole season - with a relatively small impact on milk production. This is one option for farmers who are facing challenges filling roles, or who want to offer more flexible work hours. This project will continue over the next two years, with trials planned of flexible milking on commercial farms.

We have also seen a lot of interest in DairyNZ's MilkSmart programme in Canterbury. Last year we hosted a MilkSmart field day which was well attended. We have seen many farms who have adopted MilkSmart practices being able to reduce milking times by an average of an hour per day as a result of making this change. Spending less time in the shed allows more time for strategic thinking, and also some valuable family time.

One thing I have noticed about farms in Canterbury is that farmers are keen to continue improving the way they operate and create ever more efficient businesses. We have seen many farms take part in DairyNZ's FarmTune programme. The workshops are an opportunity for farm teams to share ideas on how to save time and money by identifying what's not working well, and come up with better solutions to use on-farm.

Finally, we recognise that it's not been an easy start to 2020. We have seen flooding in Mid Canterbury and Southland, and extremely dry conditions over summer and into autumn affecting many regions, including parts of Canterbury. DairyNZ has been working with a range of organisations to identify what support is needed for farmers. Conditions can change quickly on-farm and there are lots of organisations offering assistance, so please get in touch with one of DairyNZ's consulting team if you need any help.

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Protecting NZ piggeries

Pork farming is a relatively small industry in New Zealand—but with consumption growing dramatically in the country, it's a significant one.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY NZPORK



On average, Kiwis eat 23.46kg of pork per capita each year—8.81kg of NZ-produced pork and 14.65kg of imported meat.

Imported meat is one of the factors that requires exceptional biosecurity measures in the sector—not least to keep the outbreak of highly-contagious African Swine Fever clear of our borders.

"The New Zealand pork industry is very high health compared to other pig industries internationally," says Eric Neumann, Adjunct Associate Professor in Veterinary Epidemiology at Massey University and a consultant to industry body New Zealand Pork.

"There's a high cost of production here, so keeping New Zealand disease-free is critical.

"There's a lot of discussion between the pig industry and MPI to establish appropriate restrictions on imported goods that may harbour disease agents. There are different levels of risk. For instance, animal products such as fresh pork coming into the country may carry with them a risk of animal disease."

Commercial pig farmers are encouraged to take stringent measures around movement of animals, people and vehicles.

"When farmers go overseas, they often visit other farms or livestock expos," says Dr

Neumann. "We encourage people to avoid contact with pigs overseas and when they return to their own farm, avoid contact with their pigs for several days to ensure they don't put their animals at risk of an exotic disease."

New Zealand Pork director Jason Palmer is co-owner of a Canterbury farrow to finish operation. All stock was replaced with high health animals when he bought into the business.

"The higher the health, the better the animal's performance," he says. "That's a key component of good pig management. It's essential to buy pigs from a supplier with very high health standards.

"Pigs, people and transport are the three vectors likely to carry disease. Everyone who comes onto our piggery has to shower and completely change all clothes and footwear. Wherever possible, nothing comes beyond the perimeter fence. All transport trucks stay outside. Not every piggery has that level of biosecurity protocol but more are moving towards it."

While NZPork can help promote biosecurity on the approximately 100 commercial NZ pig farming operations, no equivalent group has a mandate to look after pig health and biosecurity on the estimated

six to eight-thousand other farms and lifestyle blocks that also keep small numbers of pigs—so the message about on-farm biosecurity needs to spread beyond the commercial farming sector.

"It's important that people keeping a few pigs are aware of the risks," says Mr Neumann.

"There is no requirement for premises registration nor any mandated traceability programme for non-commercial properties that keep pigs. For farms that have only a few pigs, contact with a vet who is familiar with pig diseases may be infrequent, so issues may not be picked up quickly.

"Anyone keeping pigs should be aware that disease-causing viruses can come into New Zealand on imported pigmeat. It's illegal to feed any pigs waste food containing meat products or food that has come into contact with meat unless it has been heated to 100 degrees Celsius for one hour."

For details on treating waste food for pigs, see mpi.govt.nz. If you notice any unusual symptoms about animals, report it to your vet or MPI's pest and disease hotline on 0800 809 966.



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“Win-backs” no longer a retailer option



Energy consumers have the opportunity for more choice of energy companies, thanks to the recent decision by the Electricity Authority to ban the retailer based win-backs for 180 days after a customer has decided to switch to another retailer.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

But the opportunity to negotiate a better “first off” deal when negotiating with a large retailer for the first time still remains the best pathway for Ruralco members seeking an energy agreement that is well priced and realistic.

The win-back method came into play when a power customer opted to leave their supplying retailer, but were then enticed back to that supplier when they were offered a better deal.

The number of switcher retailers has grown in recent years after a change in regulations by the Electricity Authority back in 2015 required retailers to provide general pricing plans to any consumer requesting them.

Until then it was only possible to assess prices through the Consumer NZ funded Powerswitch process.

The move by the Electricity Authority on win backs has come about thanks to the authority carrying out an electricity price review last year. This was the same review that recommended an ending to prompt payment discounts,

something the government has undertaken to raise with the sector with the minister writing to electricity retailers telling them she expects them to make discounts available to all customers.

Meridian Energy followed through on this and handed \$5 million back to customers. The government has told the industry that if other companies do not follow suit, it will regulate to ensure they are forced to.

The review estimated customers could save up to \$45 million a year if all retailers followed Meridian's lead.

The entire review process has been generated by concern over the rising cost of electricity in New Zealand over the past two decades. Residential prices have increased by almost half since 2000, and 80% over the past 28 years after inflation has been allowed for.

This is a rate higher than other OECD countries and comes as commercial prices have fallen by 24% and industrial prices have increased by 18%.

Wholesale electricity prices in New Zealand took a significant jump in late 2018 after a dry spell down south and gas supply issues to gas fired stations, and those prices have been slow to level out.

This has been in part due to hydro storage alerts in early 2019, dry North Island hydro conditions through the first half of 2019 continuing through to this summer, and increased wholesale spot gas prices all year through 2019.

Those daily gas spot prices are now sitting over double what they were back in early 2018.

Industry analysts anticipate that gas supplies will remain tight leading to continued higher longer term wholesale electricity prices, up 30–40% on their past long term average.

Meantime gaps have been growing between the highest and lowest retailers' prices.

Despite having 35 energy retailers, the “big five” consisting of Genesis, Contact, Mercury, Meridian and Trustpower, claim over 90% of that, meaning they have the critical mass to offer incentives to customers to remain with them.

Tracey Gordon, Ruralco Energy Sales Manager says given the horsepower the big companies have behind them, it makes sense to be up front in negotiations with them about pricing expectations early on in negotiations on what constitutes a workable, realistic power deal with them.

Survey results last year from Canstar Blue showed that of 4200 respondents, only 43% actually compared electricity prices. This was despite a majority of people expressing concern about their power bill cost every month.

The action by the Electricity Authority has effectively banned the win-back offerings for 180 days after the customer has made a switch.

Tracey says this makes it even more important to work early on to set the best price and contract conditions with a retailer, something the Ruralco Energy team have the skills and contacts to help members negotiate on their behalf.

The new win-back rule comes into effect on March 31 and the Electricity Authority will regularly monitor the market for compliance and competitive effects including pricing and acquisition costs. It will review the impact of the decision in three years' time.

Tracey urges Ruralco members to come to her and her team before deciding to quit their electricity retailer, given the inability to return for at least 180 days under the new conditions.

“We can put an independent eye over what is being offered, and make sure they are really getting the best deal. There are many companies and sales staff out there putting offers out that re not correct. We don't want our members to be stuck with a higher price than they need to.”

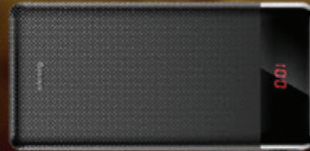
Tracey says there are still opportunities to get a good deal from a large retailer.

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April sowing options for winter feed

The hot, dry start to 2020 will no doubt have had a flow on effect on feed budgeting and planting decisions ahead of winter, with spring silage being fed early due to the dry conditions. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM



IMAGE: Agricom's Milton Oats

With the high pressure to meet stock demands and the window to plant winter feed diminishing it is important to know that there are still options available that can provide quality feed into the winter. The earlier in autumn winter feed crops are planted, the larger the yield opportunity, however crops such as oats, triticale and annual ryegrasses can be planted through April and May to help meet feed demands in those challenging months.

When sowing grass and cereals in April, the goal is generally to maximise June the 1st yield. Italian and annual ryegrasses can be sown through to the start of April and are good options for additional feed though the winter if managed correctly. The most important thing to get right when growing grass for winter feed is the sowing rate. High sowing rates directly influence establishment reliability and yield

(more at the first and often second grazing through winter). Grasses such as Asset Italian diploid ryegrass and Jivet tetraploid annual ryegrass need to be sown at 30 kg/ha + when sown through April. This will be one of the few ways of elevating 1st of June yields.

In terms of oats, Agricom's Milton and Coronet oats can both be sown in April for a single winter grazing. Milton oats are faster to maturity than Coronet oats providing higher levels of feed during early/mid-winter. Alternatively, Coronet oats can provide very high-quality feed later in the season (mid/late-winter) due to a later maturity date. Both oats have excellent winter disease tolerance as any comparison with older white or black oats will show.

The use of Kudos or Prophet forage triticale's are very good options that produce similar amounts of feed as oats but also offer a

grazing/regrowth if sown early to mid-autumn. Triticale shows greater ability to tolerate colder conditions (frost) and can be used to grow a large amount of high-quality feed/silage into early-spring.

The management of forage cereals is very similar to annual ryegrass management. Forage cereals should be sown at 2-3 cm in depth, with a DAP type fertiliser; an application of 35 units of nitrogen per hectare should then be applied after sowing and for later sowings this should be avoided with all nitrogen applied at sowing. If grazing over the winter, graze the forage cereal as you would an annual ryegrass.

As with other forage options, it is important to note nitrates can cause stock health issues if the levels in the plant are too high. Levels accumulate in the plant during periods of active growth and following days of low sunlight and cool temperatures and have the potential to cause nitrate toxicity. Risks are greater on high fertility soils, or where nitrogen has been applied in the previous four weeks. If crop and weather conditions indicate a possible problem, take fresh samples to a veterinarian for testing. Introduce animals gradually to risky crops, provide a low-N supplementary feed (e.g. hay), and inspect animals daily.

For more information talk to your local Ruralco representative.

TABLE 1. Options for April – May sowing from Agricom

PLANTING TIME	INTENDED USE	BEST OPTIONS
MARCH TO EARLY MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single grazing in winter 4-6,000 kg DM/ha (Late winter for later sowing date) 	Milton oats, Coronet oats
MARCH TO EARLY APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-grazing in winter 4-6,000 kg DM/ha sprayed out in early spring for spring sown crop rotation 	Kudos triticale, ryecorn, Jivet Annual ryegrass
MARCH TO EARLY APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-grazing in winter + silage in spring 4-5,000 kg DM/ha + spring silage crop 	Kudos triticale, Asset Italian ryegrass or Jivet Annual ryegrass
APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single graze in winter + silage in spring 3-4,000 kg DM/ha + silage crop 	Prophet triticale, Kudos triticale
LATE APRIL-JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grazing, silage in spring 	Prophet triticale, Kudos triticale, Milton oats

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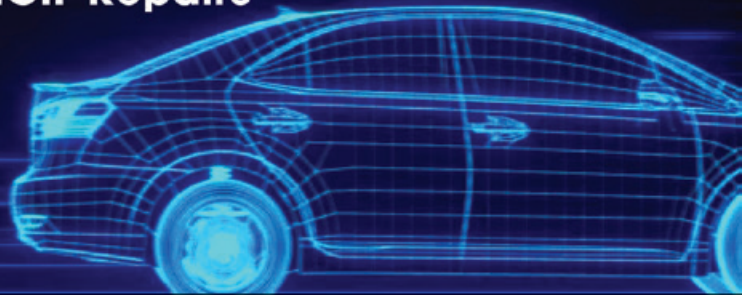
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In 2012, with 15 years behind him as a qualified and experienced auto electrician, Steve Anderson took a leap and went out into business on his own.



Moving to a small premise on Victoria Street, Ashburton, Steve founded Ace Auto Electrical. A year later, Steve had outgrown the premises, taken on another auto electrician and moved to the back building at 39 Robinson Street, in the Riverside Industrial area of Ashburton.

In January 2020, with the business continuing to grow, Steve and the team at the newly re-branded Ace Automotive, were excited to expand into the front building at 39 Robinson Street, with this site having recently been vacated by Hydraulink.

Expansion into the street front building has allowed Ace Automotive to have a larger, more fit for purpose workshop, offices and a customer lounge area. "We've been at 39 Robinson Street for seven years so when the front building became available, it was natural for us to take it over. By tying the move with our rebrand to Ace Automotive, taking on a mechanic to complement our team of five auto electricians, the new building and branding will make it easier for our customers to find us and find out what we do" Steve said.

Ace Automotive's point of difference is that they offer full electrical and air conditioning

services. Trouble with headlights, stereos, batteries, dashboard warning lights, air conditioning, starter motors, alternators, trailer lighting is no trouble as Ace Automotive are the specialists for these repairs in Mid Canterbury. With this recent addition of mechanical services, coupled with a top range of batteries, oils and parts, Ace Automotive ensure that no machine is out of bounds - cars, utes, farming machinery, motorbikes, boats and trailers, petrol and diesel. They also offer pre and post warrant of fitness repairs, fleet servicing and on-farm repairs.

"From our customers perspective it makes it easier that one business can offer both auto electrical and mechanical repairs. There are many synergies between the two, and it is a natural fit for the expansion and growth of the business," said Steve

Expanding into mechanical repairs saw local mechanic, Riley Smith join the team in January

2020. As a keen jet-boater and qualified mechanic, Riley brings over 15 years of industry experience including extensive skills with light trucks, 4WD utes, motorbikes, side by sides, jetboats and cars. Riley had an eight-year stint fine tuning his skills on motorbikes. "I grew up around cars and in my spare time I enjoy river-racing jet boats. I've always enjoyed fixing things and I like the variety that being a mechanic offers. No two jobs are the same and every day is different."

Alongside a new building and mechanic, Ace Automotive have recently partnered with Fleetpin, becoming the local installer for the real-time GPS tracking system. A fleet management tool which allows owners or managers to see where vehicles and machinery are at any point, Fleetpin is both a safety tool and tool to improve operational efficiency.

"We are thrilled to have a mechanic join us, pleased with our new space and excited to be the installers for Fleetpin. This enables us to offer our rural customers the best service and to ultimately keep our customers machinery running better for longer," said Steve.

Ace Automotive have been a Ruralco supplier since 2015 and are proud to offer their history of outstanding customer service, proficient industry knowledge, a high standard of workmanship and attention to detail. Contact the team at Ace Automotive for your auto electrical and mechanical repairs.

IMAGES: Steve at the newly rebranded Ace Automotive at 39 Robinson Street, in the Riverside Industrial area of Ashburton.



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New findings for fodder beet

A recently completed project sheds new light on optimising fodder beet production.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS

A project has resulted in valuable implications for establishing fodder beet and managing fertiliser in order to optimise yields.

The recently completed three-year Sustainable Farming Fund project was led by Plant & Food Research and involved Ballance Agri-Nutrients and others.

The project trialled different rates and timings of nitrogen (N), potassium (K) and boron (B) applications at sites (including dairying, arable cropping and sheep and beef, in both irrigated and rain-fed conditions) across five key fodder beet production regions.

Nitrogen (N)

According to results of the trials, N should be applied prudently to fodder beet, as it is a luxury feeder of N. When N application rates were increased, crop N uptake and N concentration increased but no consistent increase in yield occurred. In the first year of the study, yield response to N fertiliser varied across sites, with responses ranging from three sites showing no response to added N, up to responses of 100 to 200 kg/ha of added N. Similar results occurred in year 2, with peak N response up to 100 kg/ha of added N.

On average applying up to 100 kg N/ha optimised yield. Applying N at sowing and again at canopy closure helps to optimise yields, but a third application did not notably increase yield. Response to N fertiliser depended on the level of available N in the soil, demonstrating the benefit of soil testing to avoid unnecessary N applications and expenditure.

Potassium (K)

Fodder beet took up large amounts of K, but this depended on the soil K level and the amount applied. Across the trial sites K application rate and timing did not affect yields, even at low K soil test levels (as low as QTK of 3), suggesting fodder beet response to added K is minimal.

Even so, soil testing is still suggested, as it is important to consider fodder beet in the full crop/pasture rotation. For QTK below 3, adding up to 100 kg K/ha supplies adequate K for fodder beet and subsequent crops/pasture. If QTK is 3-5, 50 kg K/ha is sufficient and for QTK greater than 5, adding K will not affect yield, so it can be withheld.

Boron (B)

In the trials the essential micronutrient B had no effect on yield, but B soil test levels across the sites were not in deficiency ranges. B is important for crop health, so it should still be supplied adequately at sowing to prevent brown heart rot. Unlike other nutrient deficiencies, B deficiency cannot be remedied after the crop has established.

Soil and herbage testing

The trial highlighted the value of soil tests such as Ballance's fodder beet profile test. The test is taken before sowing to a depth of 150 mm, and identifies available N, K and B, as well as phosphorus, pH, sulphur, sodium and magnesium levels (see Table 1 for target levels). Testing well before the crop is sown allows for the time needed to adjust soil test levels, especially soil pH, if required.

If nutrient deficiencies are suspected once the crop has established, a herbage test at canopy closure will confirm if further nutrient application is required.

TABLE 1: Target soil test results for growing fodder beet

TEST	TARGET LEVEL
pH	6.0-6.2
Phosphorus (Olsen P)	≥15
Potassium (QTK)	≥3
Sulphur (sulphate S)	Not available *
Magnesium (QTMg)	≥8
Sodium (QTNa)	≥4
Boron (mg/kg)	1.1

* Fodder beet has no clear sulphur (S) soil test range, but overseas evidence indicates applying 20-30 kg S in the base fertiliser is sufficient. The Superten and Cropzeal range are useful options.

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For over 26 years, Hartley Curd and his team at Masterguard Security Cameras have offered specialist security services throughout the South Island.

However, after attending a security expo and conference in 2008 in the USA, Hartley foresaw technology as the future of security, and he made a decision to sell the locksmith and alarms portion of the business and focus solely on cameras.

"I was excited to see how quickly technology was developing. I saw that cameras would no longer just be used for catching thieves, but they would become an integral tool for the management and analysis of business. I couldn't wait to bring this back to our customers" Hartley said.

"We have built our customer base across various industries, and we strive to provide the best possible service and solutions. Our senior technician, Craig Osborne, has been with us since the inception of the dedicated camera business and supporting us we have a young experienced and dynamic team" Hartley said.

Research and development play a big part of the security camera industry and the latest technology has become more readily and economically viable for small to medium sized businesses. The features of modern cameras include the ability to view a camera from anywhere in the world via a smart phones; an app that sends customers an alert when a person or vehicle breaks an invisible line on the driveway or front door; cameras which are steered and

controlled from a smart phone or pc and which illuminate up to 500m at night. The technology has become so good, there are cameras which read a vehicle licence plate by translating the image into actual letters and numbers, this then automatically creating a list for the user.

Farmers have installed cameras on their properties with a view to their yard to protect fuel, provide security, monitor people and vehicles coming on and off the property, improving health and safety and as a tool for enhancing the farms bio security.

Masterguard Security Cameras have dairy farming customers who have installed cameras for a range of reasons, but all to ensure the protection and efficient management of their assets. Hartley said "A great example is a dairy farming customer who has a large circular or rectangle yard, they were finding it difficult to see where the backing gate was in relation to the cows. We have been able to overcome this by installing a special camera and position it to look over the yard. The picture is then displayed on a screen inside the shed to assist the shed operator. The feedback has been excellent with staff being able to manage the herd better and animal welfare has improved."

Customer and equine vet, Steve Williams, has a security camera installed to view his yards and another mounted on his centre pivot. With

remote access from his smart phone, Steve can view his stock, check the pivot is operating and maintain security around his property. Steve said "I have no doubt that these cameras have saved quite a number of foals. The footage is clear and the still photos we are able to capture from the camera are excellent."

Hartley is excited about how this technology can help customers manage their business. "Using specialist thermal imaging cameras, we have partnered with a New Zealand wide retailer to provide heat mapping and people counting. These thermal images will identify the parts of the store where customers spend most of their time and the camera can count the number of people coming and going from the store" Hartley said.

"If you are considering installing a security camera then don't hesitate to contact us for an obligation free assessment survey and quote" Hartley said. Masterguard Security Cameras are exclusive Ruralco suppliers.



ABOVE: Newly born foals captured on night vision camera

TOP: The technology has become so good there are cameras that illuminate up to 500m at night

MAIN IMAGE: A dairy farming customer who has a large circular or rectangle yard, they were finding it difficult to see where the backing gate was in relation to the cows

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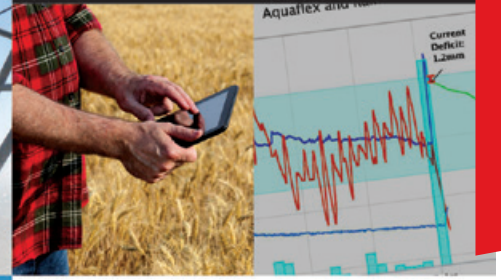
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Regenerative agriculture— good management by another name?

Regenerative agriculture is getting a lot of headlines in New Zealand and a number of growers have approached FAR with questions about if it works, how it works, and whether or not we plan to do any research in the area.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY ANNA HESLOP, FAR;
IMAGE SUPPLIED BY FAR

A quick Google search produces many definitions of regenerative agriculture, most of which focus around improving soil quality. For example, "...a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services. Based on that, the answer to the questions above are "yes", "yes" and "we already do, a lot".

The devil, as always, is in the detail. While the goals of regenerative agriculture are generally quite clear, the methods for achieving those

goals are less so. There are many schools of thought associated with regenerative agriculture and these are very similar to those described for conservation agriculture, organics, agroecology and restorative agriculture. Practices common to all include minimal soil disturbance, composting, restoring biodiversity, the use of cover crops and integrated pest management. All of these are focused on rebuilding soil organic matter, improving soil health, reducing the use of synthetic inputs and enhancing



soils where, as outlined below, carbon stocks can be as low as 10 tonnes carbon/hectare.

What does the science say?

Scientific research on regenerative agriculture is relatively scarce, with most of the information available on-line being books, reports and media articles. There is however, a lot of peer-reviewed research on individual components of regenerative agriculture, things like cover crops and no-till. It would be very useful to see some research focused on a real-world holistic regenerative agriculture system, preferably in New Zealand.

Is it practicable and economically feasible here?

Building up organic matter means changing the current dynamic equilibrium between inputs and outputs. For arable farmers this could mean minimising tillage, eliminating bare soil, encouraging plant diversity and water percolation, and integrating on-farm livestock and cropping operations. However, in the New Zealand context, introducing animals requires careful evaluation. In the northern hemisphere, animals are frequently fed supplements which are grown elsewhere, meaning that the nutrients then incorporated into the soils in cultivation have been imported. In New Zealand, where most cows are outside on pasture most of the time, integrating them means taking land out of cropping. If the returns for beef and sheep increase, it may be viable to bring them back into the system.

So, based on FAR's knowledge of regenerative agriculture and the comments above, is regenerative agriculture onto something? Is it something arable growers should consider? Here's what we think:

- New Zealand soils are already in pretty good shape, but there's always room for improvement, particularly if you are growing crops on low carbon soils or you have acquired land that has been managed poorly over previous years.
- Many regenerative agriculture practices are already being carried out by arable growers keen to improve nutrient efficiency, reduce green-house gas emissions and ensure good weed, pest and disease control with reduced access to agrichemicals.
- Current FAR research that overlaps with regenerative agriculture practices include long term cultivation trials at Chertsey and Tamahere, the use of cover crops, the development of integrated pest management programmes, understanding soil quality and developing soil health indicators.

No matter whether you embrace the full spectrum of regenerative agriculture practices or call it by another name, any improvements that growers can make to the quality and resilience of their soil ecosystem will lead to long term benefits for their farm business.

crop resilience. From an arable industry perspective, many of these ideas already have a well-recognised label...good management practice.

Using the term regenerative agriculture in New Zealand has one main downside. This holistic land management practice was developed overseas in areas where soils had been seriously depleted, or blown away due to years of over-cropping...think the Kansas Dust Bowl. Buying into the regenerative agriculture narrative means that we are also buying into the false assumption that New Zealand soils are in a similarly bad state, which for the main part is not true. So, we have a question of our own, should we be looking for regenerative solutions or good management practices?

We approached Dr Jacqueline Rowarth, soil scientist and analyst, for her perspective on the issue and she came up with the following list of things to consider.

What problem will it solve?

Regenerative agriculture targets 'unhealthy soils' by building up organic matter, which improves water holding capacity and provides food for soil organisms. This, in turn, assists with soil structure and porosity.

Is that a problem for me?

In 2018, the NZ Ministry for the Environment reported that soil total carbon (which accounts for approximately 58% of organic matter), was within the acceptable target range at 95% of tested sites in New Zealand. The University of Waikato's Professor Louis Schipper has reported that New Zealand pastures have soil C stocks as high as 109 to 138 tonnes carbon/ha. While cropping soils tend to have lower carbon stocks than pastoral soils, because of cultivation and removal of carbon in crop harvest, they are frequently over 90 tonnes/ha to 30cm. Compare this with overseas

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Good immunity

I recently read a small book called *The Secret Life of Cows*. It was a fascinating read about bovine behaviour and the complex relationships that exist between cows and between cows and people. WORDS SUPPLIED BY IAN HODGE BVSC, MANZCVS, VETERINARIAN AND TECHNICAL MANAGER, VETERINARY ENTERPRISES GROUP

The author had a delightful way of interpreting cow behaviour in terms of human behaviour. For example she would interpret some actions that a cow exhibited as saying “thankyou” or not liking someone on any particular day. She interpreted one cow licking the other one as a similar behaviour to that of a mother cuddling her child. The farm where the cows “lived” was in the Cotswold area of England, and the farmer (the author) had mapped all the families of cows. She knew all the daughters and the progeny of the daughters, and the sons and the bulls they turned into. The key message throughout this little book was the effect of a friendly and caring environment on the health and welfare of the animals, and that if given a choice animals will seek out those things which they want to do in order to “feel” better.

The impact of an animal’s environment and the way we treat animals has a profound effect on their welfare which in turn affects their production and reproduction: two things which we rely on to be continually optimised year after year. Good examples of this are poorly designed cow tracks and lameness in dairy cows, and lack of shelter and a high death rate in new-born lambs. There are many examples where we could improve animal’s environments and the way we manage them so they respond favourably and (re) produce more.

With winter looming, an animal’s environment becomes even more important. Shelter can prevent many adverse health events, and balanced, well formulated feeding regimes will also keep animals in a health state more resistant to disease. We don’t have to look far to see how disease affects individuals more prone to becoming infected: The novel coronavirus has a tendency to affect those with poor lung function (smokers), and ringworm almost exclusively affects individuals with compromised or immature immune function. As winter approaches and the nights and days get colder animals will become challenged and more prone to disease. Autumn is the right time to be checking the trace mineral status of animals through liver tissue analysis. The evidence that stable trace mineral levels aid a good immune system is overwhelming. Autumn is also the time when nitrate levels can accumulate in slower growing plants, when the soil is still warm. Nitrate levels reduce the ability of the blood to carry oxygen. Deoxygenated blood results in many problems associated with gas exchange and circulation, and it can quickly be fatal.

Respiratory problems are also common in the autumn. Single animals or larger groups can suffer pneumonia which can be viral or bacterial in origin, and can affect animals with compromised immunity or lung function.

Vaccines are available to offset the severity of respiratory disease. Remember that good shelter (less draught) has a major effect on helping prevent this condition.

Animals that are weaned in the autumn can also be susceptible to disease. Careful management of weaning is very important. Deer are susceptible to Yersiniosis when stressed at weaning, but the disease can be almost totally prevented by carefully feeding and weaning. Calves kept in draughty pens are much more susceptible to neonatal diarrhoea than calves provided warm, draught free pens and dry bedding.

As dairy cows approach dry off, maintaining their health becomes very important. Milk production slowly reduces, and the udder can become more vulnerable to infection. Teat spraying so that every side of every teat of every cow is completely covered by teat spray after every milking in the few weeks prior to cows drying off is critical. This disinfection of the teats reduces the bacterial challenge in the herd which in turn will improve the efficacy of dry cow therapy.

Ultimately those animals that are free of disease will require less treatment with antibiotics. Antibiotic use rationalisation is something that all vets and doctors are now working very closely with. Maintain health and resilience and remain free from disease.



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Where will the water flow in the future?

Water is hitting headlines across the country. Regardless of whether you're from an urban background or a rural background, water issues are relevant to everyone in one way or another. We all have an emotional attachment to water and something to say about it.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ELIZABETH SOAL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE IRRIGATION NZ



Water shortages are creeping into towns and cities in many parts of the country. Hot and dry conditions are putting severe pressure on water availability across New Zealand not only for rural communities but urban too.

In contrast to growing concerns of drought, we've had terrible flooding in Southland recently. Impacting communities, land, and habitats.

Investment in planning, governance, and infrastructure would significantly reduce the impact of these extreme, but becoming more common, weather events.

Water is so important to our lives, we need it to survive, after all, 60% of human bodies are in fact water, it is vital for all forms of life.

Heading into an election year, it is so important we are creating a national water strategy that provides and guides water resilience, reliability and capacity to adapt to weather events and the provide for the needs of everyone. Whether that be farmers of animals, growers of fruit and vegetables or grapes for wine, water for watering your garden, reliable water when you

turn the tap on... the list goes on.

A great way to get involved with what the future of a water strategy in New Zealand should be is by coming to IrrigationNZ's 'Water for Life' Conference, being hosted in the heart of Canterbury at the Airforce Museum of New Zealand, Wigram, 7–9 April 2020. Everything I mentioned earlier is going to be discussed at the conference and I want you and everyone else who has an interest in water to help us shape a water strategy for a healthy and thriving Aotearoa.

This year's theme of 'Water for Life' aims to combine the idea of water for all and water for the future. How we will manage and steward this precious community resource in the future with all the uncertainties we are now experiencing—will be critical so New Zealand leads the world stage with its sustainable approach.

The conference offers a chance to listen to some of the movers and shakers in the primary sector as well as a panel discussion to take part in there will be many other

ABOVE: Water shortages are creeping into towns and cities in many parts of the country

highlights. These include the expo with over 45 exhibitors a chance to view some of the amazing technology for water use and for the environment. The conference dinner is always a highlight, with entertainment and the prestigious Innovation in Irrigation award being announced, recognising the latest ground-breaking equipment and strategies to enhance irrigation systems and water management.

Come along, learn something new and be a part of the conversation. #Waterforlife 2020



LEFT: Elizabeth Soal, Chief Executive, Irrigation NZ

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