

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

APRIL / MAY 2017



Reaping the
rewards from
years of pushing
the boundaries

Coming out of
a dark place

Another educational
year ahead for Arable Ys

Seeds, science and
farming traverse
the Plains

A taste of
wild country

From the Group CEO



Celebrating rural inspiration

Inspiration takes many shapes and forms and in this issue of Real Farmer we celebrate that diversity through a variety of articles.

Our cover story features the Hargreaves family and their South Canterbury beef stud, Kakahu Angus. By his own admission,

it took Gerald some time before he fully embraced the potential possibilities of the stud which is now making headlines and being showcased on a national level. His inspiration is helping create a legacy which has a bright future in the hands of his son and daughter-in-law, Tom and Anna.

In another succession farming story, Warwick and Anne Green talk about their newest farming venture at Roecombe Hill near Sheffield, in Canterbury, and how daughter Ros and son-in-law, Bill are now part of the operation. Warwick will be known to many in cropping circles thanks to his decades of involvement in the industry at Kimiha Research Station and more latterly as the head of Seed Force, which he stood down from last year. On a personal level I met Warwick during the early 1980s. I found his energy and enthusiasm inspiring, and it's led to a longstanding relationship, and is a good example

of the sorts of affiliations and associations which are vital to success within the rural sector.

Farming can be a lonely vocation and we often hear stories of farmers suffering from depression and media reports on our shocking suicide statistics, especially in rural areas. But it is unusual to hear directly from someone struggling with depression, and even rarer for that person to be a farmer. Sam Robinson is bucking that trend and is speaking up about a plight which affects many in an effort to raise awareness and support for others in similar situations.

It is always a challenge in farming to create networks when so many work in isolation or in small teams and we have to make the most of the opportunities which come our way to meet and talk with others. Sam's story is inspiring and well worth a read, and we are proud to be able to share it with you. We are always looking for ways to support our rural community. At the end of the day your business is our business.

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RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

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Cover Story



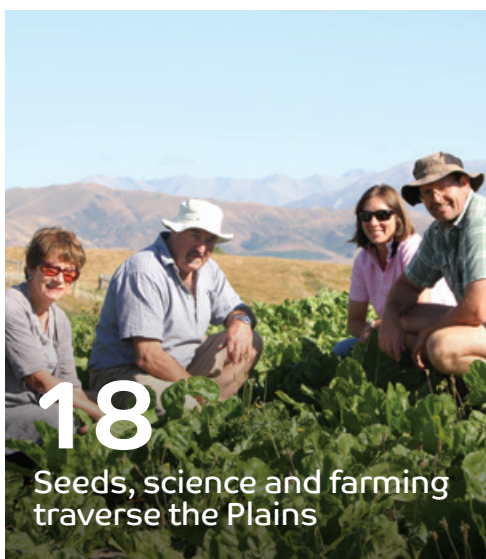
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ON THE COVER:
Tom, Anna, Sue and Gerald Hargreaves with Francesca (18 months) and Macey the Labrador



Reaping the rewards from years of pushing the boundaries



Twenty years ago Angus bull breeder Gerald-Hargreaves went out on a limb making a decision that ultimately changed the entire direction on his South Canterbury beef stud, and with it set Kakahu Angus on a path to breeding some of the best bulls in the business.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

Today, Kakahu Angus is leading the way in terms of using proven science and technology to boost returns to farmers selling at the top end of the meat market through Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs), utilising the vast pool of the American Angus herd.

Their bulls are sought after across the country, with around 100 sold at its annual sale in June. Kakahu progeny are rated number one for carcass weight, and this year 90 per cent of its 2015 born heifers due to calf from August were rated in the top 10 per cent of the breed average on the Angus Pure Index (API).

But it's been a hard sell, and it's only now that Kakahu Angus is starting to reap the benefits of Gerald's years of pushing the boundaries, not to mention hard work, with clients attaining results and achieving higher returns through genetic gains and better pastures.

Kakahu was bought by the Hargreaves family in 1924. Originally part of the Opuha run, it was previously owned by the Studholme Brothers farming company which at one time had included Te Waimate and Coldstream, along with a host of other properties in the North Island. The homestead was built in 1896, and a substantial garden and oak-lined driveway was planted using seedlings brought out by ship from England.

At that time it was more than 12,000 hectares, but by the time Gerald took it over from his father in 1966 it had been reduced to just 450 hectares. Fresh from two years working in the United Kingdom after leaving school, Gerald returned to the farm and initially saw no sense in breeding stud bulls so the stud, which was started in 1954, was split in two with Gerald keeping just 30 cows.



"I thought it was a stupid business, so I sold half the cows. A competitor said, 'you should have sold the lot'. So, I thought that's a challenge!" laughed Gerald.

Back then it was smaller, selling between 15–20 bulls annually, most of which were bundled off to Molesworth. It wasn't until the 1970s that Gerald really started to get into the breeding side of it. "I have to admit that I really didn't know what I was doing at the start. They were pure New Zealand (genetics)."

In the early 1990s a few innovative New Zealand Angus breeders headed to the United States to look at new genetics. Reluctantly Gerald tagged along. "I didn't want to go to the US. I didn't see the point because up until then every bull that I had seen introduced to New Zealand hadn't been suitable."

But once introduced to the right people, Gerald quickly realised just how much Kiwi Angus

ABOVE: Tom, Anna, Sue and Gerald Hargreaves with Francesca (18 months) and Macey the Labrador
BELOW: Kakahu has been in the Hargreaves family since 1924

breeders had to gain from using US genetics, capitalising on decades of progeny testing and driven by a thriving domestic market shouting out for tender, consistent, high-quality, marbled beef. Certified Angus Beef (CAB) is recognised as the world's biggest beef brand selling 1 billion pounds (lbs) worldwide (increasing 13% per annum), he says. "At the end of the day, it's the consumer that's the judge, not us." The penny dropped. "They were very different to those bulls I had seen before. Suddenly, it gave me focus and something to aspire to. I knew what I was doing, compared to just breeding a bull. It was life changing," said Gerald, with his customary infectious enthusiasm.

With upwards of 400,000 Angus registrations annually, 10 times the number of Australasia, they are able to find bulls in the top 1 per cent for performance in the American Angus herd that ticked the boxes for structure, type and temperament to suit New Zealand conditions. And to that end, he's been using mainly US bulls ever since, returning yearly to find new bulls, accessing their soundness and suitability for New Zealand conditions, as well as carefully studying their offspring.

Kakahu aims to breed cattle suitable for the high end meat market, so when breeders are paid for quality, they will be at the leading edge. There's so much data available. By embracing that technology, Gerald says they can guarantee more dollars per hectare. Kakahu is breeding



ABOVE: Anna and Tom run their own boutique interiors, architecture, graphic design and advertising business together, Thomas & Co, in addition to the farming operation

BELOW: Kakahu also breeds Charolais cattle

cattle so clients will have a high degree of repeatability for programmes such as Silver Fern Farms elite EQ grade and Blue Apron. Kakahu is also one of 30 Angus studs involved in a partnership with AngusPure to improve the eating quality of Angus beef.

But while Gerald puts an emphasis on EBVs, using it to make informed genetic decisions, some things haven't changed. "We won't put a bull up that's not sound, and we won't have a cow in the herd that's not structurally sound. It's a no brainer. It should be everyone's philosophy," he says.

Kakahu's cows are of medium build with strong structural soundness, are active and have a good temperament. They are run under commercial conditions, and expected to live a long time and produce good even calves every year. Each year they mate their yearling heifers to medium weight bulls. Calves are weighed, tagged and DNA tested at birth to check parentage, which also provides an opportunity to access each and every cow, recording data such as ease of birth, temperament, feet and general structure, culling if required.

Much of the farm's annual turnover though rests on its on-farm stud sale each June, attracting buyers from all over the country. It's make or break. With more than 100 bulls put up on average over the past decade, Kakahu Angus holds the second biggest Angus sale in New Zealand. They also sell around 30 charolais bulls. This year will be its 41st sale. It's a huge affair with friends and family roped into help, in everything from washing the bulls to making the sandwiches. Last year 90-odd bulls were sold for an average of \$7,000 each, and they'll be hoping for at least that this year.

While the bull sale is central to Kakahu's business, they also run a large commercial operation

wintering 550 Friesian bulls and 100 Angus heifers purchased from various clients which are put in calf to their top yearling bulls and sold as in-calf heifers from December the following year. The farm now covers 1,200 hectares, of which 260 hectares is irrigated land, and the rest is hill country. In addition to the cattle, they also run 3,000 mainly Romney-based/composite ewes on the more unproductive tussock country.

Going forward, Kakahu's success now rests firmly in the hands of the next generation. Daughters Belinda and Fiona have followed their own careers, but Tom, and his wife, Anna, have now taken over the day-to-day running of the farm as well as running their own boutique interiors, architecture, graphic design and advertising business, Thomas & Co. Along with doing all the stud advertising and website work, Anna also has

her own clients, which she juggles around being a full-time mum to 18-month-old Francesca.

Returning to the family farm wasn't always Tom's plan. "Dad said to go away and don't come back until you're 30. I took that quite literally and came back just three months before my 30th birthday," laughs Tom. In the time since he'd finished school Tom had a stint working for the McRaes at Glens of Tekoa Station near Culverden, did a year at Lincoln University which he hated, so went off and played polo in England and Ireland.

After realising he didn't have that much of a future as a professional polo player ("I wasn't good enough") while he was in the UK, he managed to secure a job working for an architecture firm in Bath, reaffirming his love of architecture and design. So, on his return to New Zealand he launched into a Bachelor of Design majoring in Interior Architecture at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), now known as Ara. It was there that he met Anna, who was completing a Bachelor of Design majoring in Visual Communication; they eventually headed to Europe, and then Melbourne, where Tom worked for an architect company designing commercial buildings around the world.

But with his 30th birthday looming, Tom knew it was a case of now or never. "I owed it to everyone to come back and give it a go." When it came to succession, luckily everyone was on the same page, says Tom. "The fact that everyone wanted it to stay in the family—that's why it worked." A Christchurch city girl, it was also a big call for Anna to move to the country, inheriting the six hectare park-like garden with a predominance of English trees, rhododendrons and camellias which is open to the public for groups and tours, but she's taken to it with her traditional gusto.





ABOVE: Overlooking the pastures at Kakahu

Tom gave himself two years, starting off as a shepherd and learning the ropes from the bottom up. Gradually he started taking over, Gerald happy to take a step back. "The learning curve was vertical. But the more responsibilities I got, the more I learnt, and the more I started to enjoy it. It was quite daunting at the start, but the more people you meet, the better it gets."

Tom's the first to admit that he still has a lot to learn, but he sees that as an advantage, not adverse to drawing on the expertise of others, whether it's bringing in a tailing gang instead of trying to do it themselves or using specialist consultants where needed. "I'm a big believer in having people that are as good, if not better than you and in my case, that's pretty easy," says Tom. "I look at the guys I have working for me and it's as important to them as it is to me that this farm is running really well. I see farming as a really big business and a massive industry, and there is no point in trying to know everything. My goal is for my staff to know more than me. Having them have a passion for your place helps you make those decisions and trust those guys in what they do. They need to love the farm as much as we do, and do it as well as we would do it."

Tom's fortunate he has gathered a great team of staff around him, most of who have been at Kakahu for more than three years. They include a full-time tractor driver and two block managers – one helping with the cattle stud and one looking after the commercial side. Integral to the team is Tonga national Sani Hansen, who has been at Kakahu for 20 years as a general farm labourer, go-to Mr Fix-it man-come gardener.

With such a strong team, it's afforded Tom the flexibility to continue his passion for architecture and design on the side. It started when Gerald and Sue needed a new house to live in nearby, putting Tom's skills to good use. He also took charge of completely renovating and modernising the homestead before he and Anna moved in. He's since designed four homes and done several renovations, with many more waiting in the pipeline.

The farm is still his priority but he estimates that he spends about 40 per cent of his time on Thomas & Co projects, while the other 60 per cent is devoted to the farm. "I love the variety, and the fact that my life is just not focused on one thing. It gets you out meeting different types of people," says Tom. It's also a great way to have a business together. "I do all the structure and the form of the building and then Anna takes over and works on the interior of the building. She'll do all the finishes and the design of the kitchen, and even the colour-schemes with the clients. It works well for both of us."

Although Gerald has stepped back from the fray, if it sounds like he's been put out to pasture, think again. More at home in his digger these days, he is currently in charge of on-going development, working on transforming 350 hectares of gorse and old pasture into lush fields capable of running 15–20 ewes to the hectare as opposed to less than 10. "I don't think he'll ever retire as such," laughs Tom. "When you have put your life and soul into a place you don't just walk away."

"I'm happy on the digger," says Gerald. "That way I can make myself useful without getting in the

way. I think as you get older you slow down, and Tom's just ramping it up again. He's doing the things that I should have done."

While Gerald and Tom are both excited about the future, they see many challenges ahead, especially with regards to the widening gap between rural and urban. There is a fine line between becoming more productive without negatively affecting the environment, but it's in our best interests not to ruin it, says Tom. "We want to protect our land, not because we have to, but because we want to. The more the industry learns, the more we improve. With the benefit of what we know now, you can either choose to act or choose not to. I'm trying to influence what I do in this world in my short time to help the next generation (Francesca). It's something that I am a big believer in," says Tom.

Tom and Gerald have been proactive. In the past decade, they have taken many steps to protect the environment around their property and Tom is an active member of the Kakahu Catchment Group. They have fenced off more than 5km of river from stock and built sediment ponds to act as filters or undertook riparian plantings before any run-off meets waterways (creeks and Kakahu River). "Farming is becoming more intensive and we want to reduce the risk as much as possible. Eighty per cent of our farming activity ends up in the river. Measurements of what goes into the river and what comes out has shown no detrimental change over the past five years. We want to make sure that we are doing is not affecting the future of Kakahu."

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Keeping an eye out

Long gone are the days when you could leave the keys in the truck and the doors to your sheds unlocked and not think anything of it. Farmers and growers have, by necessity, become a lot more security conscious over the years.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY IRRIGATION NZ



"Keeping an eye on things takes on a whole new meaning when you live rurally" says Irrigation NZ CEO, Andrew Curtis. "Farmers and growers would need eyes in the back of their head to notice everything going on around them, which is why neighbours and established neighbourhood watch groups are so important out here."

Curtis was speaking out about security in light of the recent 'attack' on irrigation equipment in the Mackenzie District. Omarama farmer, Richard Subtil, had dozens of irrigator tyres slashed, resulting in an estimated \$40,000 worth of damage. At the time, Green Peace campaigner, Genevieve Toop, said it was entirely possible that someone took out their frustration on this farmer's equipment and that she could "understand why."

"Hopefully it's not the beginning of an ugly trend—targeting people in the rural sector because of some perceived blight on the environment. Vandalism is a totally unacceptable response and in this instance, clearly misguided given Subtil is an

Environment Award-winning operator."

Irrigation NZ works closely with its Risk Partner, FMG, providing farmers and growers with information and resources to keep themselves—and their assets—safe.

"Keeping an eye on things takes on a whole new meaning when you live rurally."

"Prevention is always better than cure and farmers need to be each other's eyes and ears and report any suspicious behaviour," advised Paul Ralph, Manager Risk Services, FMG. "We support advice from NZ Police, which is to report any suspicious behaviour no matter how small it may seem, as your information may be the key that resolves a wider pattern of offending."

Irrigation NZ is also introducing risk management into its training programmes and through its partnership with FMG, can provide practical advice to farmers.

IMAGE: Irrigation NZ and FMG host on-farm workshops to help rural communities manage risk; (left to right) Steven Breneger, Johnny Dingle, Scott Harvey

"Irrigation NZ's focus is to ensure the equipment is secure from a business continuity perspective. If a farmer or grower can't use their irrigator then they run the risk of it impacting their livelihood, particularly at this critical time of the year" said Curtis. "Partnering with FMG enables us to share the experience and knowledge they have of the wider range of risks faced by rural communities so together, we can promote a more holistic view of risk and how to manage it."

FMG runs a series of Rural Crime Prevention Workshops, which are open to anyone living in rural communities. They have also produced a rural crime prevention guide to help keep your farm, your family—and your irrigators—safe.

To find out more go to: www.fmg.co.nz/advice/how-to-avoid-irrigator-damage/

Coming out of a dark place

Sam Robinson speaks from raw experience when he likens depression to stumbling around forever in a dark room searching for the light switch, banging against furniture and fittings, becoming increasingly frustrated, hurt and trapped by your predicament.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER



"For me that feeling pretty much sums up what depression is like. Your frustrations compound on top of each other, and you never seem to be able make progress."

"It gets to the extent you get so worked about something as simple as spilling your cup of coffee on the floor that you go into an uncontrollable rage and punch a wall or just burst into tears."

Sam is a rarity in New Zealand, and even more so in New Zealand farming circles. He has battled with mental health issues over the past years, and while still working his way through them, he believes he sees a smoother ride ahead than what he has had recently.

Son of a well-established farming family in Methven, he has chosen to speak out about his demons recently in the hope he can help other rural people suffering from depression.

And it is help the sector should welcome. New Zealand has an unenviable record for suicide rates, with 579 people taking their lives in 2015–16, and of that 18 were farmers. Often depression is a background factor in that dark number.

The government has recognised the disproportionately high number of rural suicides by providing more funding for organisations including FarmStrong and the Rural Support Trust.

Sam admits he has been close to what many in his state would have viewed as a final solution to a world of mental pain, and wants to speak out to stop others getting to the same stage.

"But the challenge I think is not so much trying to talk to the people who are suffering depression. They are often in such a state, they won't hear you, everything becomes such an effort to respond to that sort of thing. You are the guy stumbling around looking for the light switch and not hearing anything."

He acknowledges the efforts of initiatives like FarmStrong in raising awareness of rural mental health.

"The efforts of FarmStrong and people like Sir John Kirwan are great in breaking the surface on this. But it is still not socially acceptable to talk about it, it is still putting it back onto the people who are suffering from it," he says.

Instead he is wanting to encourage more people who may be mentally healthy to think harder, and act faster, towards people who they suspect may not be 100%.

"It may just be a case of knowing a person is not looking or sounding too good, and simply asking him (or her) if they are okay, if there is anything you can do, even if it's just getting off the farm for a bit and having a talk."

Sam admits he has always been outspoken and kicked off his campaign with "a bit of a rant" on Facebook during a bad patch.

In it he spoke about how mental health remains the "elephant in the room" for most New Zealanders. He said it is worse in rural New Zealand, where the "number 8 wire" mentality for getting by in often socially isolated

environments means blokes won't put their hands up to admit they are not feeling right. Then when farming's 24/7 non-stop demands are added in, it is little wonder the sector's mental health is painted on a black canvas.

"And what really surprised me was just how overwhelming the response was. I have done a couple now on Facebook and there is a real feeling out there that we need to deal with this and deal with it quickly."

For Sam the battle has been even tougher knowing his father also battles the "black dog" of depression at times, and it is only in recent months they have re-connected and started communicating well again.

Opening that channel has proven invaluable to helping his pathway to recovery, and also for his father to make some critical, clear headed decisions over the farm's future.

"Basically it was me coming to Dad and telling him I had decided I did not want to go farming, prompting us to decide to put the farm on the market."

He admits selling a family property that has been farmed by generations for 100 years is no easy thing, but he and his family have recognised the tough mental toll the dairy conversion business has taken on them.

"Dad is still going to keep 60ha, but it's a decision we have made after I asked him if it was worth it all in terms of the effect it was having upon us."

He does not blame the pressures that inevitably come with a dairy conversion and large scale operation, but believes they may have simply accelerated the timeframe for a decision that had to be made at some stage.

"But going from arable to dairying, you do suddenly have those extra pressures of time, debt and people to deal with. It is quite a change in farm type and lifestyle."

For Sam the pathway to recovery still involves a career somewhere in agriculture, playing to the reward he gets interacting with people, possibly in a rural service area once he has

completed his B.Comm at Lincoln in global business and supply chain.

"But now we have made the decision, I do have this sense the options are wide open, it's scary but it's also good."

His pathway to recovery has included a focus on physical activity. That has included working hard to get into shape for playing in the Methven rugby seniors as he also recovers from knee surgery.

"Exercise and the endorphin release you get from it is really important for your mental health, but it is also a tough one to follow through on if you are depressed. Often the last thing a depressed person wants to do is get up and get active, but it's vital."

Nutrition has also been important. "When I was back home farming it was too easy to fill the tank with junk food. I have started to prepare dinners ahead, make lunch and drop the junk food."

He admits alcohol has played a role in trying to dampen his unease in social situations and doesn't claim to have dropped it altogether.

"In a small community it is hard not to have a drink, and socialising is good for you, but I have had to learn to limit myself and know when to stop."

He has remained a member of the Methven Young Farmers Club, and enjoys the social contact with other young people who have had a wide range of life experiences and contacts.

"You really get out of that what you put in, and it's good to maintain that contact in a social setting, outside of the farm."

He admits the decision to sell the family farm has not been an easy one, but is one that the family have been able to make with clear heads, and still leave his Dad with a rewarding, workable land area into his retirement.

For Sam the future is wide open.

"It's bloody scary and that's why myself, along with everyone else battling a mental illness need help to get through, help us find that bloody light switch so we can get out of the dark room."



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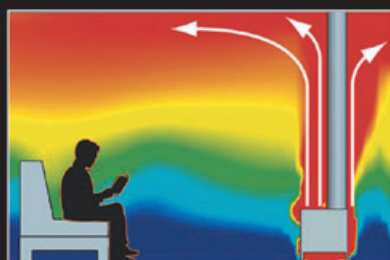
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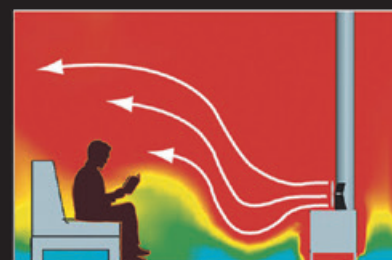
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Always opt for the real thing

It can be tempting... those after-market tractor parts, sometimes cheaper than the “real thing”. They can be so easy to order-on-line, promises of quick delivery...what could possibly go wrong? WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY JOHNSON GLUYAS TRACTORS AND NORWOOD



Potentially, just about everything, says Chris Johnson, managing director of Johnson Gluyas Tractors. And he should know, after more than 40 years in the industry.

“When you buy brand-specific parts for your New Holland tractor you’re not buying just that vital component. You’re buying decades of quality production, experience and dedication to the farming industry.”

So, what are the benefits of choosing to avoid after-market parts that might appear to be an attractive proposition, especially for farmers striving to keep expenditure down.

“First and foremost, it comes down to performance and efficiency. The New Holland brand name is trusted for its reliability. When you buy spare parts that bear the New Holland name you are buying a product that has been manufactured from quality materials, using high-tech methods and with knowledge and experience that has been built up over many years,” says Chris.

This is the opposite of the ethos behind the production of after-market tractor parts. Maximising profit is their aim here and this can involve the use of inferior materials. The outcome of that hardly needs spelling out.

Chris’s technical staff reckon that cheaper, after-market cultivator discs, for example have been

found to wear out up to three times faster than branded discs.

He also points out that research across the licensed dealer-network has shown that genuine parts are often comparable in cost to aftermarket lines, and in some instances, have actually been cheaper.

Sometimes, says Chris, after-market parts can bear a reputable brand name, such as New Holland. They are sold cheap because they are rejects which have by various means ended up on the market, despite not meeting their manufacturer’s strict quality controls.

So, how do you avoid this trap? After all, could you tell if a crankshaft branded with the New Holland name really was the real deal or was a pirated part?

That’s where your local licensed dealer is invaluable. They only buy parts from registered distributors who likewise, only source their stock from the true brand manufacturer.

Buying branded parts is not only about the assurance of quality that’s going to last.

After-market parts, because they are often made of low-grade materials and possibly using inferior manufacturing processes, will often damage other parts they come in contact with.

This can be extremely costly, not the least because this immediately renders the warranty on branded parts null and void.

All branded parts come with a full warranty, plus licensed dealers can access the entire range that bears the manufacturer’s warranty. They will have a huge range on hand but they can source all other parts quickly and offer a 24/7 service to their clients. You won’t find that level of service and commitment, buying after-mart parts.

Licensed dealers can also source parts for older models of tractors that are unlikely to be produced by after-market manufacturers. They need to sell cheap products fast, so have no interest in making parts that will only ever be sold in small numbers.

It’s not just the parts that are crucial to keep farming operations running smoothly, or in the event of a breakdown, getting things back on track quickly. Lubricants for example are also vital.

They too come in after-mart form and once again, what might seem like a good deal at first because of lower cost could well lead to trouble. Branded lubricants for example are designed and produced to meet machinery manufacturers’ standards and will do exactly the job they say they will do. Not only that, using after-market products may create warranty issues too.

“It’s a straightforward message,” says Chris “Opt for parts and lubricants from branded names because not only does that ensure quality and durability but a high level of service as well.”

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Somerset Grocer is a talking point since new ownership

With the best coffee around, Ashburton's Somerset Grocer is the perfect spot to catch a breather when you're ploughing through a lost list of jobs in town.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY SOMERSET GROCER



glass of wine, and not have to raise your voice to be heard.

A monthly wine club has become very popular, with dates and featured wines for the year already posted on Facebook. Mark said the Astrolabe wines to be tasted in May would give a people a chance to taste several Marlborough wines by winemaker Simon Waghorn.

Nicky and Mark have enjoyed putting their stamp on the business over the past 12 months and are hands-on operators, working in the kitchen or deli as needed. The Grocer is a seven-day a week café, employing a team of friendly wait staff, chefs and specialist baristas.

Aside from the food they prepare on the premises, the café also sells artisan food. Nicky said the deli stocked New Zealand-made and packaged food as well as imported specialty items, including cheese, condiments and sweets and more.



There's also yummy food, free wi-fi... and wine.

The Grocer ticks all the boxes, whether you're meeting friends or having a business lunch. Their new boutique bar, open Thursday and Friday nights, is also the ideal spot for an end-of-week wine.

The cabinet food and coffee is also available to go and they offer a catering service, for both small and large events, on or off the premises.

The café was originally established by the Ashburton Licensing Trust, who sold it to Mark and Nicky Milmine a year ago. Nicky had been managing the venue since 2000 while Mark ran another trust establishment, Speight's.

For the past 12 months, they have been working together at the Grocer putting their own stamp on the business. Daughters Mickayla and Molly are also part of the team.

The Milmines have a long history in the hospitality trade, coming to Ashburton after 11 years as owner-operators of the Last Post in Oamaru.

Their Ashburton café is on the ground floor of Somerset House on Burnett Street, the name

a historic link to the Somerset bar which operated there in the 1980s.

The boutique bar though bears little resemblance to the windowless Somerset where many Ashburton young people once spent their Friday nights after work. The new bar has a rustic feel thanks to two trophy deer heads and some tactile wallpaper that looks and feels like deer skin.

The trophy heads are a tahr and chamois, both shot by Mark's father in the Waitakere ranges.

They are a bit of a talking point, says Mark. The opposing wall has a touch of glamour with large mirrors and elegant wallpaper, and the combination works perfectly. A bar on the rear wall carries a wide range of wine and beer.

Nicky said the space was not designed to be in competition with noisy bars or night clubs; in the Somerset you can share a platter of food and a

ABOVE: The perfect selection to choose from for morning tea

MAIN IMAGE: A beautiful spread enjoyed in the glamorous wine bar

The Grocer's gift hamper service is also popular, with a huge range of hampers available year round for special occasions. Nicky said hampers could be tailored to meet the personal tastes or interests of the recipient and were available to match any budget.

Somerset Grocer and Ruralco have partnered for several events in the past year, including their Ladies' Night, Christmas Event and South Island Agricultural Field Days. Nicky said it was a great way to spread the word in the rural community.

The café's Facebook page is a great way to keep in touch with major events and special evenings—lock in their Taste of Christmas evening on November 22, 2017.



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Keep track of trace elements

If your major nutrients are in good supply but you are still not achieving desired yields or production, take a look at the finer details.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



"Plant growth—whether it's crop or pasture—will be affected if any nutrient that it needs is in short supply," says Ballance Science Extension Officer Aimee Robinson. "In a pastoral context, this will affect the health and productivity of grazing stock or limit your pasture production. If your big four [N, P, K and S] are OK, the limiting factor could be a trace element, such as selenium, cobalt, copper, manganese or molybdenum."

Trace elements can be deficient in soils or become unavailable to plants for a number of reasons.

1. Fundamental deficiency in parent rock material

Selenium is a good example of this in our region, where soils are derived from weathered greywacke.

2. Impact of pH

Soil pH has an impact on the availability of nutrients. Alkaline soils (high pH) are prone to zinc, iron, copper and manganese deficiencies. In combination with parent rock issues, over-liming contributes to manganese deficiency in the Barrhill/Rakaia area.

3. Supply of other nutrients

In some cases an abundant supply of one nutrient will affect the ability of a plant to access another nutrient. For example, high levels of molybdenum and sulphur in the soil will interfere with the absorption of copper by the animal.

4. Removal without replacement

If a trace element is used, not returned via incorporation of crop residues, animal

dung or urine and/or not replaced or topped up with fertiliser, then it can become deficient. A good example is molybdenum. Molybdenum helps clover fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and release it underground to adjacent plants. This increases grass growth and the proportion of clover in the sward.

"When this was discovered, a lot of molybdenum was applied with superphosphate to New Zealand farmland. This led to a spate of animal health issues as excess molybdenum affects copper uptake," says Aimee. "Farmers have been cautious about molybdenum ever since. Many stopped applying it altogether, so their levels have been depleted. Applied appropriately, it can offer significant benefits to clover-based pasture."

Fertiliser or animal supplement?

Obviously in a cropping situation you do not have a choice. The key is matching trace element application to crop needs. "Applying boron to brassicas at sowing is a wise investment to protect your crop and profits from the impact of brown heart," advises Aimee. "Applying Cropzeal Boron Boost at 150–300 kg/ha will supply the boron needs of most brassica crops. It is important to get this trace element to the crop at establishment. Foliar application later will increase the level of boron in leaves but will not prevent brown heart. Make sure there is enough moisture in the soil to move the boron to the plant roots."

In a pastoral context, stock type may influence your approach. A well-planned fertiliser programme can elevate levels of vital selenium, copper and cobalt in herbage to support sheep, cattle and deer through key times. For example, cobalt could be applied in October/November to spike herbage for weaning lambs.

However, the demands of dairy cows are generally higher and supplements may still be needed during critical growth and production periods. "Selenium is very relevant here," says Aimee. "Applying selenium in spring via fertiliser is important. Our selenium fertiliser is a mixture of slow- and fast-release selenium so this will keep levels elevated in the pasture during the year. However, it is important to keep herbage testing to ensure this is sufficient for your grazing animals."

For more information on trace element use, contact the Ruralco Seed team on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or talk to your local Ballance Nutrient Specialist.

Seeds, science and farming traverse the Plains



IMAGE: The four of them work well as a team, with Bill & Ros predominantly on the flat country and Warwick & Anne working up on the rolling hill country

North, east or west, having farmed most points of the compass within the Canterbury region, Warwick and Anne Green believe they may have found a place that completes their farming career, and sets up a positive succession for family ownership.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

For Warwick that farming career has also provided an invaluable test bed for the last 11 years, putting trial to practice in his role heading Seed Force, one of the country's significant proprietary seed companies.

The passion to go farming in his younger days had always lurked within Warwick, despite leaving Lincoln with a less than conventional degree for the College at the time, comprising botany, zoology and agronomy papers.

Leaving Lincoln he took up a role with Wrightson NMA as the company started to establish its Kimihia Research station at Lincoln in 1973.

After two years of living in town, the young couple decided it was then or never to go farming, and with that took up a 186ha ex solidier settlement block in North Canterbury in the Waikari Valley.

The years there served Warwick a solid grounding in farming to the climate.

With no irrigation and some tough hill country above the valley floor, the country instilled a level of carefulness, conservatism and respect for the elements that made one farm for a "1 in 5" good year, a "2 in 5" average years and "2 in 5" severe drought years.



"And I know we pretty much experienced all that in the time we were there. You learnt to plan for things not going the way you intended, and keep a very good eye on your finances, dependent upon how the year played out."

He recalls them as tough, formative years that came with the impact of "Rogernomics" reforms that pulled the chocks from under sheep farming in particular. Ewe prices plummeted to a \$1 a head, while interest rates rose into the early 20% mark.

The community, like many throughout the country quickly realised its strength lay in unity. Farmers shared equipment and seasonal jobs, even doing silage contracting outside the district. To encourage a sharing of good ideas and practice, Warwick initiated a farm discussion group headed up with a MAF field officer that ran for several years.

"It was a tough time, in quite tough country, but we were all in it together, and we still have very fond memories of that time with families all growing up together and making their farms and their community work despite it all."

With farming facing a need to boost productivity and output through a tough time, Wrightson NMA invited Warwick back to his old post at Kimihia to oversee grass and crop trials and then to manage the R&D platform at Kimihia.

He took it on the basis he could continue with his other passion, farming, and undertook a 200km return trip every day to the Lincoln property.

By 1990, with the family growing up the couple decided to purchase a property nearer to specialist education for their special needs daughter Amy, and made the move south to Flemington on the south bank of the Ashburton River.



ABOVE: Bill is showing a good aptitude for farming with him and Ros committed to the future of the farm
BELOW: Warwick's right hand man

Despite being a similar size to their last property, Terralea at Flemington brought a whole new level of demands with it. The irrigated, flat land unit meant a level of income could be guaranteed from cropping, after years of nature determining budgets and stocking rates.

"But it also brought a more intense pace of farming, with the demands of irrigation and the higher costs that brought too."

Terralea at Flemington became the family farm for 25 years and over that time experienced an evolution in its farm system type. Crops moved from the traditional wheat and barley to small seed crops including Asian brassicas, ryegrass seed and clover types.

For Warwick the property provided an ideal trial ground for his work at Kimihia.

"It was a time when the agronomic aspect of farming evolved significantly, with really strong gains in yields in traditional crops like wheat and barley, and new crops starting to prove themselves."

The certainty water brought meant finishing lambs was an option, and they meshed well with the farm's cropping calendar. Italian rye grass planted in autumn was used to winter lambs on, then shut up for seed harvest over summer.

The intensive system meant for some "pretty full on years" with Warwick working at Kimihia, and he attributes much of the success to the hard work and commitment of his long time farm worker of 21 years Michael Harris.

"He became very much part of the family and his skill and commitment meant I was able to continue with that drive to my other job every day, knowing he had things under control."

Meantime by 2006 Warwick stepped out of his Research & Development (R&D) job with Wrightson to pursue his own seed company business, establishing Seed Force and remaining there as Managing Director until he stepped down last year.

For him the opportunity to have an ownership stake with a couple of colleagues and a major French shareholder company RAGT was too great an opportunity to miss.

enough to support us all, and it was a tough proposition as a first farming job given its level of intensity.

"We had also reached the point where we wanted to do something new after having farmed for a long time, and decided to seek a larger, different sort of farm that would suit. We also wanted a family farm that would provide for our future generations."

benefit with the first water flowing this year.

Plans are still relatively raw for the farm's irrigation plan, but the 90ha of irrigatable flats will lend itself well to the family's longer term plans for intensifying the property and lifting profitability.

"We have not even decided whether we will use pivots or laterals yet, but it is only 90ha, and using a pivot would demand having the trees removed, which we don't really want to do in an area where it is windy most of the time, and the shelter is needed."

The scheme has been hard won, requiring 4,000ha to be viable and just hitting that number now. Not all farmers in the district are choosing to be on the scheme in the catchment that runs from the Sheffield basin almost to the Fonterra plant at Darfield.

The irrigation provides the opportunity to grow small high value seed crops and provide winter feed in the form of fodder beet to finish 400 Angus calves on over winter.

"Irrigation means the yield can be doubled from about 15t a hectare dry matter, to 30t, it also enables us to make silage and to finish lambs. It changes the dynamics of the farm considerably."

The plan is to build the farm up to holding 5,500 stock units, a figure irrigation will tip them over. A breeding unit includes 250 Angus cows and 1,500 ewes with replacements.

"We buy in the calves we do not breed to get to the 400 total and finish them for the local trade, or for the feed lot in Ashburton."

Warwick says Angus were recommended by Roecombe Hill's previous owner for their ability to perform well in country that stretches from 300m above sea level on the flats, to 550m at the tops, where snow is not uncommon over winter.

"The cows also mean we can control the pasture well for the ewes and calves."

Wairere Romney genetics are providing the input for the capital ewe flock, with good all round performance on hill country well proven throughout New Zealand.

With family on the farm, and having stepped out of his Managing Director's role at Seed Force, Warwick could be excused for taking things easier.

"But I think I am probably busier than ever in some ways. There is a lot in managing a farm this size, and the family are still learning as they go. My wife Anne is a pivotal part of the team as she manages all the farm accounts and helps outdoors. It's a team effort and it's great to have our two granddaughters close by."

"We work really well as a team, Bill is showing a good aptitude for farming. He and Ros are enjoying learning new things and it's been a positive move with a view to the future—we're really happy about it."



ABOVE: The backyard of Warwick & Anne's property has a beautiful outlook of Sheffield and the hills beyond

"Thinking about it, I have had the perfect opportunity to do the two things I really enjoy, one of them is to farm, the other is to pursue an ongoing love of science and agronomy being applied at a farm level. I have enjoyed seeing how new varieties come to market, and being able to demonstrate how we can optimise their productivity."

The decision to leave Terralea 2015 came after Warwick had commuted about 1.0 million kilometres across the Plains between the farm and Kimihia over the 25 years.

But it was not the commute that prompted him and Anne to decide to quit the farm then.

"The decision to move came when our daughter Ros and her husband Bill became keen to get involved in farming themselves, pretty much out of the blue really."

Ros had been working for Ravensdown for 10 years, while Bill had been a chef, and both were ready for a career change.

"We knew Terralea was not going to be big

With that they retreated from the flats to the hillier country at Sheffield, tapping into their experience in hill country many years after leaving Waikari Valley.

The 420ha "Roecombe Hill" farm had been faithfully farmed by the same family for 90 years, and its scale held the promise of offering a succession opportunity for its new family owners.

"The flat country had also become more expensive, and by seeking a farm that was not irrigated, we wanted to be in a higher rainfall area.

"We were not fazed by the hill country, and this property is made up of about 420ha of rolling hill country. We were fortunate to be able to purchase part of the neighbouring farm Glenrowan and later Windermere, both flat farms and these complemented the overall farm. We have now 540ha of hill country with a good balance of hill and flats."

Not long after purchasing the property the Greens learned that the Sheffield irrigation scheme had got the green light, and the opportunity was there for Roecombe Hill to



Putting seed science into practice at Roecombe Hill

With a life time's work as committed to agronomy as to farming, Warwick Green brings a unique perspective on what works in trials when it comes to the "next big thing" in crops, and how they play out in the reality of commercial farming practices.

Warwick admits he continues to enjoy seeing how new varieties perform on farms, but laments the low level of re-grassing undertaken by many sheep and beef properties in New Zealand.

"It is only about 2-3% a year, and one of the challenges for pastoral farmers is to lift that level and to take advantage of the good new varieties of grasses that are now out there."

As the country grapples with the pros and cons of genetic engineering and what it may bring in terms of productivity gains, Warwick believes there are enough non-modified crops and grasses available that could provide more immediate gains for farm productivity.

"We have been very reliant upon ryegrass in the past, but there are varieties of cocksfoot, fescue and Lucerne around that are proving very productive."

And he's practicing what he preaches.

At Roecombe Hill brown top dominates in some pasture areas, but Warwick is progressively re-grassing, putting in new varieties of perennial rye and cocksfoot with red/white clover blends.

On the flats fodder beet reigns supreme as a high yielding winter feed option, and is a crop Seed Force invested in significantly to boost its productivity and suitability for New Zealand farm systems.

"We have seen it used in dairy systems, but I wanted to integrate it into a sheep and beef farm. It means winter is busy shifting fences for breaks, but we want to put live weight on the cattle over winter, aiming to finish them in their second autumn, rather than their second winter."

Fodder beet require significant investment in seed bed preparation, weed control and planting early on, but pay big dividends in dry matter yield, and cost per dry matter, if done properly.

They will play a big part in Warwick's belief that an integrated beef fattening, cropping and breeding unit can generate a return to support the business and the families, whilst remaining flexible enough to respond to shifts in market returns over time.

The irrigation scheme will bring pressured water to the farm gate and opens up Roecombe's opportunities, albeit at a cost of about \$800 a hectare a year regardless of how much water is used.

"But I think the reality in Canterbury is that water schemes like this are going to be the way of the future, compared to aquifer sources which are under pressure to have the demands upon them lowered. I think we may find in future aquifers will be paid for and that will put pressure on farmers to use water smarter from them."

ABOVE: Angus perform well on the high country
BELOW: Looking down on Windermere with the Ben More mountain range in the background



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PlaceMakers



Let your feet do the talking

Take your shoes off when you step inside Carpet Court Ashburton, it's the best way to appreciate the difference between carpets, underlays, tiles and vinyl.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES BY BARBARA LOVELOCK

New owners Paul and Glen (short for Glennis) Wallis have deliberately chosen to lay their best sellers on the floor of the redecorated Carpet Court store on East Street so customers can feel the difference. The new store layout also shows off the latest fabrics for curtains and blinds and includes a home décor section selling Citta products.

Part of the store will also be converted soon to showcase the home staging business Glen runs with their daughter Kylie.

Carpet Court is a family affair for the Wallis clan, as it was for the brothers Maurice, Graeme and Ken Baker, whose grandfather started the store in 1901.

Paul and Glen bought the business a year ago and have refreshed the product range and employed an in-house interior designer. They provide speedy quotes and their own carpet layers can have new floor coverings installed promptly.

The floor and furnishings business is a long way from their jobs as dairy farmers when they came to Mid Canterbury in 1984. But it is not a big leap from the home-building business they founded after moving out of farming in 2003.

Paul, with brothers Bill and Grant, once milked 600 cows on Hinds Arundel Road, the herd including their 400-strong pedigree Jersey cows.

They were something of pioneers for dairying at the time and found farming supplies businesses and veterinarians more used to meeting the needs of arable and sheep farmers. How things have changed, they say, with dairy cows now dominating the Mid Canterbury landscape.

The brothers eventually went their separate ways and Paul and Glen bought a small block and started calf rearing. When their children left home, they bought a house in town and started a building and renovating company.

Glen says their heritage villa on Bridge Street was special, but it needed TLC – lucky then that the couple enjoy getting paint on their hands. They took their hands-on approach to their building business, delivering quality workmanship and tasteful interior design.

The pair make a great team, with Glen's flair for interior design and Paul's problem-solving.

Taking over the established Carpet Court business has been a challenge but they are enjoying it. Daughter Kylie is part of the crew, along with interior designer Mari, and Ian their commercial sales consultant.



ABOVE: From left is the Carpet Court Ashburton team, Mari Scheepers, Kylie Wallis, Paul Wallis, Glen Wallis
MAIN IMAGE: Carpet Court shop front on East Street in Ashburton

The team works together helping customers with flooring and curtain choices. There is colour and texture to consider, as well as budgets and personal preferences.

"Synthetic carpet has come a long way and is currently our biggest seller. However the traditional carpet material, wool, is still chosen by those who want a natural fibre," says Glen.

Their big range of carpet samples caters for domestic and commercial uses and their range of hard tiles includes Giovanni products. Glen said the curtain fabric samples would soon be displayed in new cabinets, showing colours and textures more easily.

The home staging business Moved By Design was established before Paul and Glen bought Carpet Court and is unique in Ashburton. It works by hiring out tasteful furniture to help vendors dress a home for sale.

She said it was a popular service and one they would incorporate into the East Street store.

Paul and Glen are very excited to be the specialised flooring supplier to Ruralco.

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The Beet Guru app

May 2016 saw the release of Agricom's first mobile app, the 'Beet Guru'. Built to assist farmers and retailers with the calculation and interpretation of fodder beet yield, Agricom are excited to have released new updates to the app that further enhance its usability. WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM

As farmers and retailers alike understand, accurate measurement of fodder beet yield is technically difficult. This is predominantly because as a precision-sown crop, gaps are inevitable and lead to increased yield variation across the paddock.

Glenn Judson, Agricom's Animal Nutritionist devised the concept of the app to make calculating drymatter yields of fodder beet easier. As well as that, Judson was very keen to educate users about reporting yields within a range, rather than a single figure, in order to understand the variability of the crop and allow for the safest transition feeding.

Introducing the app Judson explains how the Beet Guru calculates a mean drymatter yield from fresh weights entered, providing a statistically valid upper and lower range of yields and simplifying the storage and reporting of this information. All grower and paddock details are stored within each assessment and users are provided with a detailed report via email at the end of the process.

"Beet Guru is a tool which allows individual estimates of yield from a paddock assessment to be combined into a mean and range," explains Judson. "Whilst you still have to do the physical measuring of the fodder beet, the Beet Guru is an in-paddock tool that you can use to get your results quicker, and store data. No more pieces of paper with weights going through the wash!"

The app describes the accuracy with which yield is being stated (i.e. with an estimated 24 tonne average yield, and 95% confidence that the true mean lies between 20 and 28 tonne). This helps put estimated yield into statistical context.

Allowing users to make decisions in the field about how many samples to take, Beet Guru provides a graphical preview of the mean and yield range with every measurement taken. It will also provide a predicted mean and range should another five samples be taken.

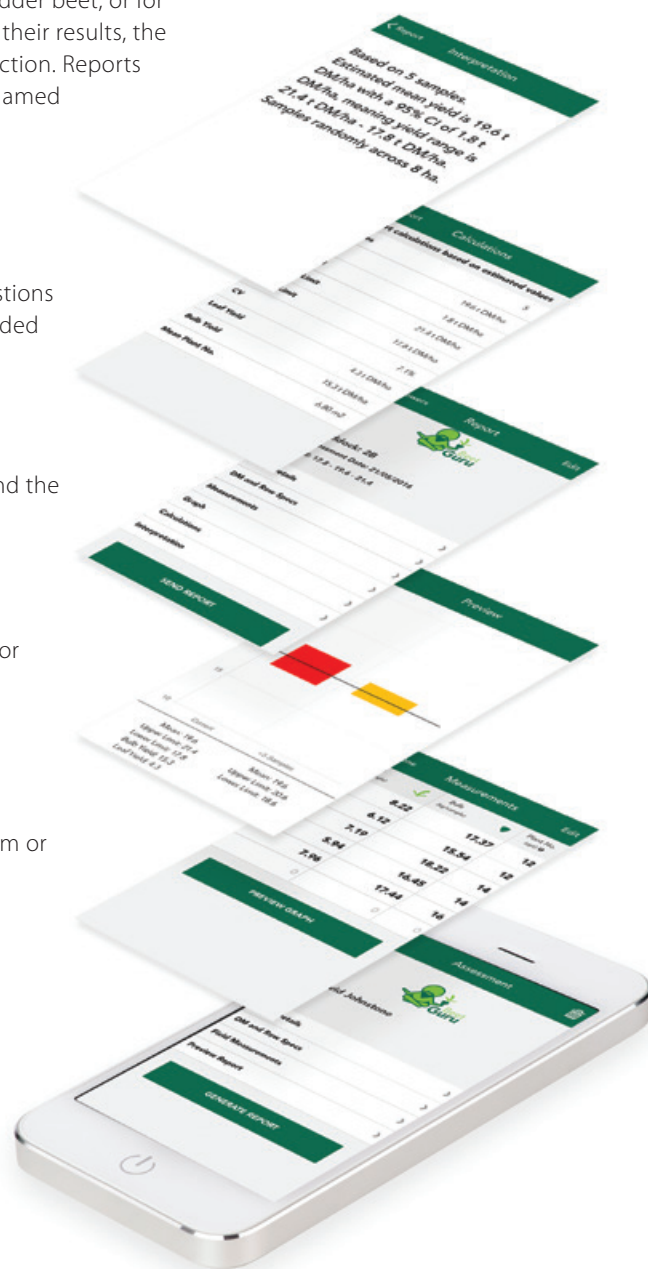
"This year we have released an update that allows users to download their own data. We have had some users measuring a lot of paddocks using the Beet Guru, and now they can analyse their own data, find any trends, and benchmark over different years as the data is provided in a spreadsheet," says Judson.

For those retailers that are using the app when measuring client's fodder beet, or for farmers who want to share their results, the Beet Guru has an email function. Reports can be sent via email as a named PDF direct to clients.

"We had some great feedback surrounding our first launch and a number of our updates released came from suggestions from our users. We have added an optional field for plant number to calculate plant population per m2, as well as some tweaks to button and number size, and the way the reporting function flows to make the app even more user friendly," explains Judson.

The Beet Guru is available for free on Apple, Android and Windows devices and can be found in the associated app store.

More information can be found at www.beetguru.com or the Ruralco Seed team on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).



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Another educational year ahead for Arable Ys

“Ruralco proudly supports Arable Y’s, working with FAR to deliver a valuable programme for the arable industry and our next generation of farmers” says Ruralco Group CEO Rob-Sharkie. WORDS SUPPLIED BY FAR



Arable Ys is a FAR initiative aimed at building confidence in, and creating opportunities for, the next generation of arable farmers. In layman’s language it’s a group of under-35 year olds from the arable industry who meet several times a year to talk about what’s happening on the land and to pick up new knowledge and skills to help them progress in their arable careers – whether on farm or in supporting industries.

FAR Arable Ys co-ordinator Matilda Gunnarsson says the group provides a great opportunity for all young people interested in cropping, and that this is reflected in the wide range of people who attend...students, farm workers, farm managers, family members moving towards ownership and industry representatives.

“Throughout the year our meetings and events cover numerous agronomic and business topics to educate and inform our members. In a typical year the programme might include some training on farming basics such as weed identification or crop growth stages, through to research updates on things like soil management

or agrichemical resistance. On the business side, speakers might address issues such as farm finance or environmental compliance.

“We also try to run a couple of farm field trips each year. These are pretty informal and work like a discussion group. The host farmer explains the farm system and provides a seasonal update, then takes questions from the group around things like crop establishment techniques or cultivar selection, and plans for managing things like disease or soil fertility. FAR staff are on hand to provide more information and link what is happening on the host farm to the wider area.” But the learning is not all done close to home. Matilda explains that Arable Ys members also have the chance to join FAR organised study tours to look at cropping further afield.

“In recent years these have included tours of the UK and Europe, of the USA and closer to home, the Southland region. In July this year, we hope to take a group to the Innovation Generation Conference in Adelaide. Innovation Generation is

run by Grain Growers Australia as their key event for 18-35 year-olds in the grain growing industry. This trip will combine conference attendance with a two or three day FAR organised tour of South Australian farms and farming businesses. We are still working on the details, but are happy to hear from anyone who would like to go the mailing list to find out more about it.”

- FAR Arable Ys was set up in 2008 with support from the Sustainable Farming Fund.
- Meetings are generally held on the third Wednesday of each month from April to November.
- Membership is informal: there is no joining fee and no expectation that you should come to every meeting.

For more information contact the FAR office 03 345 5783 or check out the Arable Ys Facebook page www.facebook.com/arableys/



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Late summer and autumn can be a real challenge

Late summer and autumn can see ideal conditions for parasite challenges in dairy stock.

WORDS BY IAN HODGE BVSC., MANZCVS. GM TECH SERVICES. VETERINARY ENTERPRISES GROUP.

Environmental conditions can be warm with adequate moisture to allow parasite larval survival and development, and significant parasite challenges to young dairy stock. Parasitism in dairy stock can have a significant negative effect on calf live weight gain through the autumn which can result in animals struggling through the winter period, despite good feeding during that time. Having below target bodyweights in spring, when mating will be fast approaching is not a good idea. Autumn drenching of calves and in-calf heifers to prevent clinical parasitism is highly recommended. It is possible to drench adult dairy cows at dry off. This is something you should discuss with your veterinarian.

Trace elements such as selenium, copper, cobalt (vitamin B12) and iodine are important in dairy cattle production systems. Selenium plays a role in assisting animal immunity and can help control the incidence of retained placenta after calving. Copper is a very important part of many enzyme systems. It can be rendered unavailable by certain dietary conditions (molybdenum, zinc and iron in plants and soil) and by some brassicas. Cobalt

makes up the vitamin B12 molecule and assists animals to fully utilize the energy released from feed. By doing this, it assists animal growth and promotes appetite. Iodine is critical for normal foetal development and animal metabolism. Brassica plants can make iodine unavailable, and supplementation is advised in consultation with your vet. It is recommended that animals are all tested regularly for trace element status to understand the levels of these elements in the blood or liver. Liver biopsies and blood samples can be taken from dairy cows as they approach dry off. The information from the tests will be very useful to assist making supplementation decisions for the winter and early spring period.

The rationalisation of antibiotic use in farm animals is now high on the agenda. Dry cow antibiotics used to treat and prevent mastitis at drying off represent a large proportion of all antibiotics prescribed by vets in New Zealand. It is essential that we all work together to use dry cow antibiotics responsibly. To achieve that, we must identify cows that are both infected and uninfected. This can be achieved through regular

herd testing (for somatic cell counts) and at the very minimum a cell count herd test within 80 days of dry off. Having this information will assist you to work with your vet to rationalise the way you use dry cow antibiotics and teat sealants to provide the best possible control of mastitis through the winter and early spring period.

Vaccinations are also a critical part of maintaining animal wellness and reducing disease in our dairy stock. It is very important that vaccinations are given at the correct time and in the correct way. Storing vaccines correctly is important to ensure that they are effective when administered. Dairy stock can be vaccinated against many diseases including bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), Leptospirosis, Salmonellosis, and certain respiratory viruses. In autumn it is very important to vaccinate all animals associated with your dairy business against Leptospirosis. This is a disease which is transmissible to humans where it can be fatal or result in a long lasting debilitating illness.

Finally now is perhaps a good time to have a review meeting with your veterinarian. Reviewing the season to see the effects of treatments, interventions and management decisions is important. Often changes will need to be made. Planning for a better season next year is also very important.

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A taste of wild country

The aroma in the Wild Country factory today is... mmm... roasting tomato, says owner Stephen Wilkinson with a smile. WORDS BY KATE TAYLOR

"First thing this morning there were 140kg of fresh tomatoes being hand diced and roasted off with a little oil and seasoning in the oven and processed for chutney. I haven't been in there myself today, but we're all hands on deck when we're needed. Chopping board on the bench and go for it."

Wild Country started in 1995 by Stephen and Angelique van Camp. The couple met while working in marketing in Auckland and ended up working on the same project. One thing led to another, including a move to an 11ha lifestyle block in Waikato and a growing niche business.

Ruralco started selling their sauces through the Gift & Homeware department at the end of last year. One of the couple's point of difference is not supplying supermarkets.

"We like supplying to places like Ruralco—they love taking our sauces because they're different."

Everything is handmade and as natural as we can get it and they're perfect for popping into gift baskets."

Angelique and Stephen make about 60 different small-batch products across their two brands, Wild Country and 362 Grillhouse. They supply more than 200 outlets including big names such as Moore Wilson's in Wellington and Farro Fresh in Auckland. Top-selling onion balsamic marmalata is exported to a food group in Singapore, a special brew of habanero mustard is made for Auckland chef Al Brown's restaurants and their gutsy 362 Grillhouse bacon jam has many loyal followers. It's brilliant with a burger, Angelique says.

"When you add a condiment to a steak or a sandwich, you give it another dimension. A ham sandwich needs mustard, cheese needs chutney and burgers need a sauce."

The business is based around food stores and gifting, supplying department stores such as Ballantynes, H&J Smiths and Auckland's Smith & Caughey's.

"They often have pantry areas with chocolate from overseas, specialty lollies and quite English-orientated gifts before Christmas. People will fill a hamper or a basket with goodies with a gift," Stephen says.

"We also supply hamper companies, for example, XYZ Promotions will tell us they want 100 of this or that to supply. The food stores range from specialty stores to butchers and wet fish shops such as Egmont Seafoods in New Plymouth or Deli-Ca-Sea in Palmerston North. These places are back in vogue and reinventing themselves. People care about where their meat comes from and ask for certain cuts. They want nice meat and something nice to go with it."

The ideas for new sauces and chutneys comes mainly from personal experience.

"We travel and try to get our ideas from overseas. The New Zealand market is so small and we don't want to copy. We try to take an ingredient and make it our own. Like last year we had chipotle products—two in each brand. Our bacon mayonnaise morphed into bacon ketchup and mustard."

"We take a new ingredient and see what's happening internationally. We're reviewing products all the time and sometimes repackaging or renaming existing products. A lot of time is also spent on labelling and food safety—literally everything you need to know is on the back of that label."

Stephen says they love embracing new products, especially local fresh fruit. The business celebrated its 21st birthday last year by giving away trial bottles of black garlic sauce to its wholesale customers. It went down so well they've just released a new black garlic and truffle steak sauce. From a dairy farming background, Stephen now works in sales, warehousing and shipping, while Angelique handles production. Angelique has Dutch and Lebanese heritage and grew up in a family of food lovers and commercial chocolate-makers.



The beginnings of Wild Country was Angelique working with another woman producing infused oils and vinegars as a side line gift business.

"They were popular on people's kitchen benches in those days," Stephen says.

"Angelique had a contract to make those type of products and the business was growing to the stage where we would both finish work at our jobs and work at the business at nights and every weekend. I'm originally from Waikato and we were both keen to relocate out to the country so when the business grew to the point where it needed to relocate we jumped at the change for a total change of lifestyle."

Five years later they gambled on going fulltime into condiment manufacture.

"We still had little bit of work in Auckland but the business very quickly became full time jobs for both of us."

They found a lifestyle block with a massive shed that could be used as a warehouse, which saved them rental in Auckland.

"We relocated the warehouse and dispatched product from its new home straight away. We just carried on, but then the contractor making our product said we were growing too quickly for them so we built a commercial kitchen in the warehouse."

It was a huge learning curve.

"We went from marketing and advertising backgrounds to being manufacturers and buying equipment and sourcing everything we needed really quickly. We went to auctions to buy stoves and pots and things and we were up and running. Obviously we've since become more sophisticated in terms of equipment and worked closely with the Waikato District Council and FoodSafe.

"We also come under the Food Safety Authority now, which is a lot more stringent. We are audited every year to make sure we're good for export markets. It's not a work-out-of-the-home-kitchen scenario. Our brand has evolved from that raffia-tied gift with wax seals to being a specialty food line. We encourage people to take the tops off and use them on their meals rather than sit them on your kitchen bench looking pretty."

In early winter, the Wild Country crew can be found harvesting quinces from local trees and they're also handy to a myriad of fresh ingredients including berries, tomatoes and figs.

Wild Country searches widely for flavour inspiration. Some recipes have been developed from family favourites and others have been inspired by research trips throughout the US.

Angelique jokes Stephen will sometimes have a hare-brained idea and she'll then do the painstaking methodology and microbiology.

"You can't just stick things in a jar."

Stephen agrees.

"We work on new projects together but it's definitely a case of me having the ideas and Angelique making it happen."

Stephen says it has been a great business move for them. As he looks out the window over their lifestyle block, the view includes some quince trees, previously raided for the business, and a couple of young Hereford cattle.

"We finish some beefies but don't eat our own beef. We're fully stocked with everything from duck to venison to lamb... of every cut... we love food. We enjoy experimenting and cooking and entertaining and enjoying the good things in life. Of course it helps that we also have a condiment business on the side," he says with a laugh.

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Ruralco makes gift giving easy

Gift giving has just got easier with the introduction of an online gift registry at Ruralco.

A great way to get the high end gifts from quality brands you desire is to set up a wedding gift registry with Ruralco, which is 100 per cent owned by ATS. There are three Gift & Homeware stores—Ashburton, Methven and Rakaia—and now an online option making it even easier for guests to select and purchase the perfect gifts for your wedding.

"Our stores have a long history of stocking high quality and distinctive giftware for special occasions, and for many years we have offered a registry service. Our new online registry provides an even simpler solution for taking the guesswork out of gift giving," says Ruralco Gift & Homeware Manager, Tina Thompson.

Tina suggests registries be set up around six months before your wedding day. "If you are getting married this coming Spring or Summer, you should be thinking about coming to see us now. It's easy to lose track of time as the big day approaches, and coming in early gives you time

to carefully select the items you want included on your gift registry and ensures we have it in stock or have time to source it for you."

There are a few considerations for the bride and groom to take into account when setting up a registry. One is to ensure there are a variety of items and a range of prices to give guests plenty of choices and another is to select gifts which will stand the test of time. Ruralco Gift & Homeware stocks a range of distinctive gifts and quality brands including beautiful linens; fine china, crystal, silver, cutlery and kitchenware; and a wide selection of home and garden accessories, all of which are sure to be treasured for a lifetime.

"Cut crystal is particularly popular at the moment. So are throws to complement your décor."

"Book a time and come in-store to set up your register with the help of one of our experienced Gift & Homeware team. Choosing the Ruralco Registry will also entitle you to receive a gift voucher equal to 10 per cent of your registry spend," says Tina.



The new online registry, which is updated as purchases are made, makes gift shopping especially easy for out-of-town guests. Ruralco can hold gifts and can arrange delivery direct to the happy couple. They even offer a gift wrapping service.

"We are here to make it easy for everyone," says Tina. "Visit us online at www.ruralco.co.nz/theregistry or telephone us on 03 307 5170 or pop in to one of our stores to find out more."

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What's the go with drugs and alcohol in the workplace?

WORDS BY JANE FOWLES, COMPLIANCE PARTNERS



What do we know?

(Collated from NZ Drug Foundation)

- According to ACC, more than half of New Zealanders are binge drinkers, one in seven smokes cannabis and eight percent have used three or more illegal drugs in the last year;
- New Zealanders have some of the higher drug-use rates in the developed world, one in six (16.6%) aged 16–64 years had used drugs recreationally in the past year;
- In 2015/16, the mean age of past-year amphetamine users was 31 years (Ministry of Health);
- Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in New Zealand and nearly half (42%) of all adults over 15 have tried it. At least weekly use was most common for people aged 55 or older (44%), this frequent use was least common among people aged 15–24. 9% of young cannabis users (aged 15–24 years) reported that their use had a harmful effect on their work, studies or employment, which was 3 times more likely than older groups;
- One third had driven under the influence of cannabis, this was most common in men aged 35–44 years and 58% of cannabis drivers think being stoned makes no difference to their driving ability;
- Over half of all party drug users think being high makes no difference to their driving ability;

- Nearly half of drivers killed on New Zealand roads had alcohol, other drugs, or both in their systems when they crashed. One in five of these drivers had used cannabis, over a quarter had used a combination of alcohol and cannabis, and another quarter had some other combination of drugs in their systems.

What can drug and alcohol issues look like at a workplace?

Out of character behaviour can be a sign, lateness to work or after lunch, unauthorised leave/increased sick days, deterioration in the quality of work, impaired judgement, poor concentration or risk taking behaviour.

Dairy farms seem to be becoming a haven for drug use and manufacturing. Workers may have access to chemicals and the irregular hours can sometimes lead to substance abuse to stay awake.

Remember that as an employer, you need to take all reasonably practicable steps to keep your workers safe from risks on farm. Providing a drug and alcohol-free workplace should form part of your overall on farm health and safety plan.

So what next?

1. Review what you have on paper. Is there a clause in your employment agreement? Do you have a drug and alcohol policy? These are both important. If you want to put a policy in place you will need to go through a process with your workers;
2. Determine on what grounds you are testing. Policies commonly allow pre-employment

testing, after an accident or incident, for reasonable cause or randomly;

3. Testing must be done by a registered professional. There are a few different ways to test but most common are breath and urine testing. Depending on the method, and the drugs, is how long the drug will be detected in the sample. Any not negative, or inconclusive result, from a test should be forwarded to a laboratory for further testing. As well as illegal substances, the test also picks up prescribed medication, such as codeine. These medications can have adverse effects on reactions so educate your workers to declare if they are on prescribed medication because majority will be unaware of the side effects;
4. If you have a not negative result, then you will need to do something about it. The worker will know that it was a not negative result so you will need to speak to them and find out what's going on. After that, it's about what your employment agreements says, your policy and your decision. The important thing is to be consistent.

Drug and alcohol testing can be a tricky process to go through so please gain independent advice before starting. Jane at Compliance Partners is happy to help you—our testing starts from \$50 per person + GST. Feel free to get in touch on 021 942 150 to discuss further. Think smart before you start.

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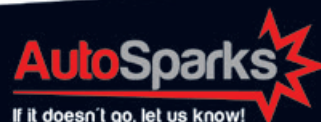
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Report highlights a mix and match in power supply-demand



It is probably not top of the pile for reading material on the farm kitchen table, but the Electricity Demand and Generation Scenario report highlights some vital aspects of electricity demand and supply that will impact urban and rural users alike in years to come. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

The report helps electricity authorities assess what the future capital needs are likely to be to maintain and expand the country's electricity infrastructure.

It also looks at what the big impacts are likely to be on New Zealand's future electricity demands, and how they demand will be met. It comes in a market that has experienced relatively flat growth in recent years, and one that has been overshadowed by the "will they, won't they" possibility of Tiwai Point aluminium smelter being shut down.

The effect of this heavy energy user at the bottom of the South Island is not always fully appreciated by the rest of New Zealand. It consumes a hefty 13% of the country's total electricity and is supplemented by receiving that electricity at a discounted rate.

The report highlights that should that deal end, as has sometimes been suggested, it would knock New Zealand's electricity demand back to the levels of mid last decade and take until the late 2020s for demand to return to today's levels. Growth projections for electricity demand in the report range between 0.4% a year and 1.9%, and renewable electricity supply plays the biggest part in meeting that demand.

As more rural users look at battery storage and photovoltaic-solar technology, the report

also expects to have more geothermal and wind capacity built in by the large generation companies, given their lowered cost component. But renewables' percentage of total generation is likely to remain similar, given cheap and abundant gas supplies also available for gas turbine generation.

This "mixed renewables" scenario is based on an increase of about 1% a year in demand, and is based around a moderate level of GDP and population growth.

This represents the moderate view of how New Zealand's electricity demand pans out – at the top end of growth is the "high grid" scenario where a 1.3% a year growth is also matched by more gas use.

The low point for demand growth is the report's "Tiwai Off" scenario—the often talked about day when the smelter is switched off and New Zealand's electricity market suddenly has a surplus of supply capacity.

Should Tiwai shut down in 2018, and if GDP also lowers that demand, all sectors will have a drop in electricity demand of about 0.4%. This would result in some geothermal plants shutting down to meet the slide in demand.

The report also attempts to allow for the "disruptor" technology that throws conventional power markets into upheaval, thanks to high

uptake of solar photovoltaic systems and electric vehicles.

Ironically the effect of disruptive solar PVs and electric vehicle technology would be to boost electricity demand, and only partially offset it with solar generation systems.

Total electricity demand and grid connected demand increase with the electric vehicle demand, but peak demand is likely to drop and become less "peaky."

The technology would shift peak power demands from their usual patterns as batteries take up peak loads and electric vehicle demand comes on during off-peak night periods.

Electric vehicle charging is expected to be mainly between 11pm and 5am.

In the more "business as usual" steady growth of the mixed renewables scenario the report estimates there will be almost 50,000 electric vehicles by 2025, still a significant jump up from the 2500 on the road today.

The report anticipates solar photovoltaic generation will grow with between 100,000 and 390,000 residential and commercial solar units installed by 2040.

But despite that number it is likely to only comprise 1–3% of generation by 2040. But the technology also means the demand can be met from new geothermal, solar and wind generation, reducing the reliance upon gas fired "peak" generators as households shift their demand curve further into off-peak periods.

Meantime the contribution of coal to New Zealand's generation mix will fade, as the giant Huntly coal fired generators are finally retired around 2018.

However the report also points out there is likely to be a shift with that closure from less flexible baseload gas generation to more flexible gas fired generation should Tiwai close - short term demand needs may have to be met by extending the life of the existing coal and gas fired Huntly generators, delaying the construction of peak gas fired supply generators.

Overall the report paints a largely positive picture of New Zealand's ability to adapt to a variety of energy demand-supply scenarios. It also highlights the increasing opportunities opening up for consumers, industrial and rural users to adopt new generation technology for their own supply, as the cost of that technology continues to fall.

To discuss any of this further, please contact Ruralco Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon on 0800 787 256.

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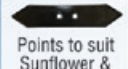


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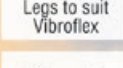
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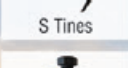
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Going paperless—bringing cloud accounting to the land

Online accounting tools have been available to the commercial world for some time, and it's likely you've heard about how cloud technology has transformed the way that many small-medium businesses are managing their finances—while also removing the need for keeping paper records. WORDS BY MATHIESON CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

The farming sector, meanwhile, has been afforded with limited options.

Traditional farm accounting systems require accountants to manually collect data from farmers which is then entered into their own system. That means accountants, banks and farmers are all working off separate ledgers, and unsurprisingly, looking at completely different sets of numbers in many instances.

In today's world of data-sharing and connections, working in isolation like this and using separate systems no longer makes sense. Having seen the success granted to commercial business owners using single-ledger software, it's no surprise that farmers are increasingly looking for a better way to collaborate online with their key business advisors.

A smarter way to farm

In 2014, Figured launched a cloud-based farm accounting solution with the goal of bringing together the entire farming team onto a single platform in real-time. The software works hand-in-hand with cloud accounting software Xero, to deliver immediate farm production and financial data.

"Because Figured is cloud-based, everyone can access the data and make instant updates. It offers a rolling forecast, and the ability to re-calculate the farm's financial position when conditions change" says John Gibson, Senior Relationship Manager, Figured.

The collaborative approach that Figured provides is proving critical to helping more farmers to confidently weather the volatility of the industry and drive the success of their operations with the help of trusted advisors. When armed with accurate financial information online, farmers are empowered to make better and faster decisions when opportunities arise, and ultimately achieve higher levels of performance and profit.

Make hay while the sun shines

Ashburton-based Mathieson Chartered Accountants are seeing more and more farmers who are motivated to use better technology in their farming business—and it's not just the younger farmers.

Employee and Figured Certified Accountant Harry Waddell agrees. "Access to one version of information means we don't have to spend time getting the basics right using multiple

versions of accounts; in the past there was a lot of back and forth with the client to get their position up to date. We are now able to generate insightful business data online, allowing us to add value. We can readily benchmark and have more meaningful conversations beyond traditional compliance-based discussions. Consequently, Mathieson's are able to have a stronger relationship with our farm clients."

Connecting the financial team

Where this connectivity is further making an impact on farming business plans is when a farmer needs to quickly provide reports to their bank. "We can go in at any time and see what is happening in the accounts, and it's allowing us to have a more open relationship and better conversations with both our accountant and bank" says Ashburton farmer, Lee-Anne Stewart of Pekanga Farms.

It gives bank managers confidence in the numbers, and the smoother process means both bank and farmer can shift their focus to growing the farming business. "Figured allows the farming team to make quick and informed decisions more collaboratively, and focus on creating future value, leading to better outcomes for farmers", Gideon Clewlow, HO Rural Development at ASB Bank explains.

More banks are quickly recognising the impact that a more streamlined online system has for their agri customers. "Information can be fed directly into our credit systems. That opens the possibility of real time credit decisions and customer benchmarking that will give our customers greater insights into their own businesses," says Scott Wishart, National Manager of Agribusiness at BNZ Bank.

In an industry with constantly changing conditions, profitable farmers are the ones that successfully control the controllables. Having access to data in real time online allows accountants to provide timely advice, bank managers to evaluate opportunities quickly and farmers to make informed decisions based on a true picture of farm performance.

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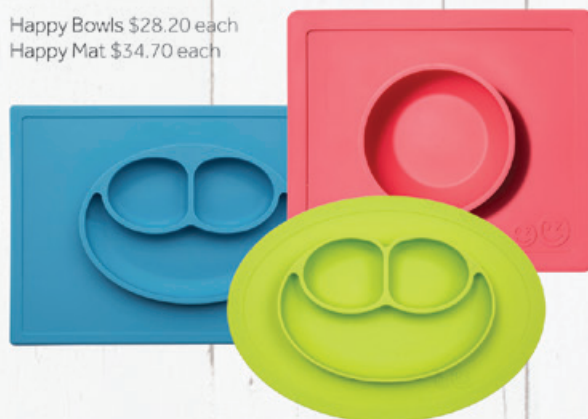


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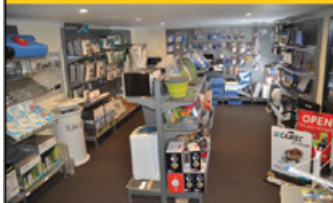
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