

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2017

Passion for horses remains the constant driver



Far side of world reignites passion for cropping

Investment in research and people

Timing right for retiring ATS Chair

Girls' Night a big hit in small town

From the Group CEO



At the time of going to print for this issue of Real Farmer, the people of North Canterbury and Marlborough are literally reeling from the devastating earthquakes which have hit the region.

Once again the country has been dealt an incredibly harsh blow by Mother Nature and it is clear it is going to take considerable time and resources to get everyone back on their feet again.

Many have stepped up to assist wherever possible and it is always heartening to see how communities rally together in times of adversity. We at ATS and Ruralco are also here to help however we can and will be keeping in touch with those in the affected regions.

It is going to take considerable resilience, fortitude and courage to get through these earthquakes and the aftermath. The people of Christchurch and surrounding areas have admirably displayed these traits following the earthquakes five years ago and we are already hearing many more stories about how people are picking themselves up and getting on with life the best they can.

It's that attitude of never giving up which sees many through difficult times and it's one we see time and time again, especially in our rural sector. This month's cover story features one couple who have persevered despite the trials and tribulations they have faced within the thoroughbred horse industry. Alan Jones and Edwina Morris of Berkley Stud share their story of how they have transformed a run-down dairy farm into a successful thoroughbred nursery.

Other features include the benefits of fodder beet boosting milk production; and the success of our first ATS/Ruralco Girls' Night Out which featured New Zealand celebrity food guru, Jax Hamilton.

We also talk to retiring ATS Chairman, Phil McKendry about his 18 years on the Board and his dedicated and loyal contribution to ATS and the wider Mid Canterbury region. Phil has been a staunch supporter of the co-operative and shares his thoughts on his time as a Director and Chairman.

With the end of 2016 fast approaching, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and wish you all a happy and safe holiday season.

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ON THE COVER:
Berkley Stud principles
Alan Jones and Edwina Morris

Passion for horses remains the constant driver



Firmly established as one of the leading thoroughbred horse studs in the South Island, a devout passion for horses remains the constant driver for Berkley Stud principles Alan Jones and Edwina Morris.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

In nine short years, the pair has almost single-handedly transformed a run-down dairy farm at Greenpark into a successful thoroughbred nursery.

It's foaling time at Berkley Stud. But with the sleepless nights, and long days spent serving mares and tending to new born foals, comes the promise of something great.

"It's our favourite time of the year," says Edwina, who is on-hand for almost every single foaling, day or night. "It's (physically) exhausting, but we just love it. It's the whole excitement of it. With every new foal born, there's the chance of a gorgeous yearling that will hopefully bring good money at the yearling sales, and go on to perform at the highest level. That's the dream. That's what keeps us going."

ABOVE: Alan Jones & Edwina Morris with son Conway (16)

Although New Zealand is world-renowned for breeding quality, sound racehorses able to adapt to racing environments around the globe, farming thoroughbreds is a tough industry, dogged by uncertainty. And if you're in the South Island, outside of the major players in the Waikato, it can be even harder to get noticed, but with at least 50 per cent of its mares travelling down from the North Island Edwina and Alan must be making an impact.

Edwina has been involved in breeding thoroughbreds for more than 30 years. Bought up in Christchurch to non-horsey parents, a chance visit to a friend with a pony at just seven years old was the catalyst for her enduring love affair with ponies, and then horses. "I did eventing and showjumping, and started breeding ponies while I was still at school!"

Following her marriage to Glyn Morris, the pair imported the Irish Hunter sire, Laughton's Legend, from Britain, establishing Wynyard Lodge Stud, with the aim of breeding sporthorses, but it soon became apparent they couldn't make a living out of breeding just sporthorses so they branched into the thoroughbred industry with the successful sire, Waikiki Star.

It was a great business and experienced many successes during its 15-year history, but after her marriage dissolved, Edwina seriously considered her options. When it came to the crunch though, she still firmly believed there was room for a commercial stud in the South Island that offered the full range of services from stallion covering, to agistment and sales preparation.

Her new relationship with Alan Jones gave her the impetus to carry on despite the industry's rather bleak outlook back then, and with his full-support they started afresh with Berkley Stud on 30 hectares near Springston standing the Argentinian-bred sire, My Halo.

Despite having never been around horses, Alan took to it like a pro trading in his full-time position as South Island Manager of a welding firm for days by Edwina's side. "He was just a natural," she explains.

The stud's success hinged on finding the right new stallion to draw mares through the gate, and Edwina and Alan thought all their prayers had been answered in the well-bred Diamond Dane, a son of the champion sire, Danehill.

The day they signed the ownership papers for Diamond Dane, Danehill died, and then he went on to finish second in the Group 1 Stradbroke Handicap. Diamond Dane had the pulling power, attracting a huge book of 130 mares in his first season, but sadly he proved infertile. The loss was a huge blow to the fledgling stud. "That was devastating both financially and emotionally. That was the time when we really could have got out of the industry," says Edwina.

The following season they found a last minute replacement in the European group winning two-year-old, Al Jadeed (Coronado's Quest-Aljawza). One of the leading two-year-olds of his year, Al Jadeed hailed from the brilliant stallion family of AP Indy, Summer Squall and Lemon Drop Kid. He attracted 113 mares in his first season, but tragedy struck the following year when he died of a lung haemorrhage mid-way through the season.

"It was a huge shock. We did a lot of soul searching after that," says Edwina. But again they couldn't bring themselves to quit. "At the time we thought it was terrible, but (looking back) it was a blessing because they had temperament issues."

Throughout the ups and downs My Halo continued to produce winners from limited



IMAGE: Despite not having been around horses, Alan took to it like a pro trading his full time position as South Island Manager of a welding firm for days by Edwin's side



opportunities, and things started to look up. Buoyed by a concerted effort to improve their broodmare band, mixed with some strategic weanling purchases, in 2005 the stud took out the Leading Vendor by Aggregate at the New Zealand Bloodstock South Island Sale, which was to be the first of eight Leading Vendor titles in a row.

Coat's Choice, a stakes performing two-year-old by sire sensation Redoute's Choice from the family of champion two-year-old and Golden Slipper winner Catbird, joined the stallion roster in 2006, and again numbers of mares visiting the stud skyrocketed.

About this time Edwina and Alan realised the property was simply too small going forward and went on the hunt for a new property, settling on a 70 hectare run-down dairy farm in Greenpark, just minutes from Lincoln. It was much smaller than they had initially imagined, but after leasing it for 10 months, its grass-growing potential won them over.

Originally home to 220 dairy cows, the farm now supports more than 200 horses with more than 100 mares foaled down on the property each season and employs on average five full-time staff working alongside Edwina and Alan. It's a 24/7 operation, 365 days of the year.

Over the past nine years Edwina and Alan have worked tirelessly to transform the property, repurposing existing buildings where possible. The old haybarn (for example) is now the main hub of operations with one walled-in bay now a smoko room, while the other two house a stable and veterinary crushes, and the old herring-bone milking shed is now used for storing horse covers and other gear. New stallion areas have also been added, but to date Edwina's dream yearling boxes have yet to be started.

Paddocks too have been reduced in size down to 1ha–1.5ha each, and hi-tensile and barbed wire fences have been removed in favour of 5ft high fences complete with electric outriggers. In all, they have put in some 26km of new fencing and planted literally thousands of the slower growing and more drought tolerant, Salix Matsudana (Chinese Willows), for shelter round almost every paddock, as well as adding laneways for improved access and water troughs throughout.

Although the fertility was extremely high, re-pasturing has been a priority to create horse-friendly pastures with the help of specialist equine agronomist Nigel Johnston of PastureFirst.

Berkley Stud's pastures are based on perennial and hybrid ryegrasses. While some 'horsey' people frown upon ryegrass use for horses, if managed right, there are no issues, explains

ABOVE: Yearlings are prepared at home and sent up to Auckland just 10 days out from the sale

BELOW: The farm now supports more than 200 horses with more than 100 mares foaled on the property

Nigel. "The main reason why we use these ryegrasses is because they are fast to establish and have very good autumn, winter and spring production. Also, as the Berkley property is situated on a heavier soil that retains moisture relatively well to other Canterbury soils, they can get good summer production as well. Perennial ryegrasses have good feed quality, enabling high quality feed for growing horses." Perennial ryegrasses used are either nil endophyte or AR1 endophyte. Despite what some people might say or hear, the AR1 endophyte is totally safe to horses as the compounds that cause grass staggers and heat stress have been removed. The main advantage



of AR1 endophyte is that it gives a higher level of insect protection than nil endophyte, particularly against Argentine Stem Weevil, but with no animal health effects, says Nigel. In smaller paddocks that are easily damaged such as the foaling paddocks, shorter lived ryegrasses such as Italian Ryegrass have been used to give quick growth as they germinate and establish quickly.

Previously, other species such as white clover and herbs (chicory and or plantain) have been added to the ryegrass mixes to increase quality and summer feed production, but it does tend to make weed control difficult.

As Berkley Stud is an ex-dairy farm, with high fertility and heavier soils, the biggest challenge is keeping the weeds (particularly docks) at bay. "It is easier to control these weeds if just straight ryegrass is used as the herbicides I recommend to use to spray the weeds will not affect the ryegrass, but will damage clover, chicory and plantain," adds Nigel.

Alan says all but three pastures had been re-grassed since they took over. "When we came there had been no re-pasturing for the past 20 years. Now we've done nearly the whole farm." Regular soil tests are also carried out with fertiliser applied accordingly.

While farming thoroughbreds is not as intensive as a dairy farm it's essentially run along the same lines, explains Edwina. Horses are selective grazers, so they cross graze with a small herd of Red Poll cattle, together with regularly topping and harrowing to keep pastures thick and lush. "If you don't have grass the mares won't lactate and they won't get in foal either. You have to have good grass."

The bulk of the Greenpark property is spelled in winter with the majority of the horses moved to a 26 hectare property closer to Lincoln. "We try to get as many of the horses off farm in winter so that when the mares come back they have lovely paddocks to go to," she says.

Outside mares start arriving in July/August to go to resident stallions, with foaling in full swing by early September.

But foaling is only one side Berkley's Stud's business. A thoroughbred stud's business is multifaceted, from serving and agisting clients' mares being sent to its stallions, to breeding its own mares to produce yearlings for sales, buying-in youngsters for sale, selling broken-in horses ready to race, and agisting outside racehorses and sales preparation. "You have to try and have many different angles," explains Edwina.

With stallions, clients pay a service fee as well as paying for daily agistment, foaling feeds and other associated costs like veterinary bills and farriers for their bloodstock. Service fees range dramatically, upwards of \$500 to \$100,000 for champion sire Savabeel, who stands at Waikato Stud. At \$4000 (Live Foal Guarantee) for both Coat's Choice and Highly Recommended, Berkley Stud's fees are at the lower end of the scale.

"There is a lot of luck involved in getting the right stallion. It's not all about having the right pedigree and raceform. In reality, most fail. And after those first two seasons the ability of a stallion to attract mares depends entirely on the racetrack performance of his progeny and a lot of that is determined by where they end up," says Edwina.

At the end of the day that's where the strength of your own broodmares comes in. "It's not enough to just rely on the stallion. It's critical to keep improving your mare herd." Edwina says the aim is to get a lovely draft of colts to take to the sales, as colts tend to bring more in the sale ring over equivalent fillies due to colts been more appealing in the lucrative Asian market.



first crop of Highly Recommended foals, who won on debut and followed that up with a recent second in the Listed Wellesley Stakes. He was sold by the stud through the Select sale this January for \$30,000.

"It's certainly put him (Highly Recommended) on the map," says Edwina. "A son of Fastnet Rock, who's doing everything right in Australia, Highly Recommended was a precocious two-year-old himself, and was multiple group and listed placed. We thought he might produce autumn two-year-olds and good three-year-olds, but this was completely unexpected. It's been a dream start."

Waldorf's exploits currently have Highly Recommended lying third on the Leading 1st

Over the years they have built their mare herd up to around 40, and are regularly upgrading it as opportunities come up and funds allow.

Preparing a young horse for the sales is like walking the gauntlet, however, unlike breeding the more traditional sheep and beef. There are many obstacles to pass. First you have to choose a stallion for the mating that in two years' time will still be fashionable. Then you have to get a live foal and have it survive the first year of life without serious injury or ailment. By sales time they have to be a good-looking individual, have no conformational faults, have good feet, a great walk and a strong presence, and also pass rigorous \$1000 x-ray testing. Its pedigree also needs to have current raceform.

While Berkley Stud remains a huge supporter of the New Zealand Bloodstock South Island Sale in Christchurch, more and more of its yearlings are now sold through the National Yearling Sales at Karaka in Auckland. Yearlings are prepared at home and sent up to Auckland just 10 days out from the sale to acclimatise to their new surroundings before going into the sales complex. They have 16 entered for Karaka 2017.

Although it is more expensive, it's proving well worth it. The stud is currently celebrating the successes of Waldorf, a two-year-old from the

ABOVE: Edwina, who is on-hand for almost every single foaling, day or night, says it is her favourite time of the year

Season Sires list and Leading Sire of Two-Year-Olds, and with the chatter amongst breeders, breakers and trainers all positive, it's hopefully a sign of what's to come.

High Recommended's early promise coupled with Coat's Choice's continued results gives Edwina and Alan every reason to be excited about the future. "We are the same as any sheep or beef breeder, we love seeing our bloodlines do well and like all studmasters, we dream of having a stallion that really fires," says Edwina. But for now they are content with riding the current wave of success, doing what they do best.

Now 16, son Conway also works on the farm and has attended the Karaka sales, while daughter Amelia, from Edwina's first marriage, works in town. Although Conway's showing all the signs of wanting to continue in the family business, only time will tell, admits Edwina. "You do have to have that underlying passion. It's got to be more than just a job otherwise you'd likely walk away. For all the wonderful stories there are just as many heartbreaking ones."

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To mow or not to mow?



In recent years, pre-grazing mowing has increased in popularity in Canterbury.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DAIRYNZ

There is plenty of anecdotal information about the benefits of pre-graze mowing but at present there is little research or data to support this. For this reason, an experiment has been set up at Lincoln University Research Dairy Farm (LURDF). This will examine the effects of pre-graze mowing as a management tool during a pasture surplus on pasture growth rate and ME and animal performance (dry matter intake, milk production, BCS, and liveweight).

About pre-grazing mowing

The Lincoln University Demonstration Farm (LUDF) adopted pre-grazing mowing as one of many changes implemented three years ago to help reduce the environmental footprint of the farm without reducing profit.

Mowing pastures before they are grazed, or topping post-grazing are not new practices. Many farmers mow or top some paddocks where there is a need to mechanically correct a post-grazing residual that was not achieved by the cows. This could be due to wet weather, cows disliking the paddock, incorrect pasture allocation or already compromised pasture quality.

A more recent approach is incorporating pre-grazing mowing into the farm system, not just to correct a mistake. The perceived benefit is higher milk solids production through increased dry

matter and ME intake plus less energy used in foraging and harvesting pasture.

In addition, an option for an increasing number of farmers is grazing paddocks at higher pre-grazing covers (ensuring plants are at the three leaf stage) resulting in longer rotation lengths and the capture of additional pasture growth.

The use of higher pre-grazing covers can make achieving target residuals challenging. Pre-graze mowing has been proposed by some as a way of meeting target residuals and maximising pasture utilisation, particularly for those with a lower stocking rate. However, this practice has an estimated cost of 40-60 \$/ha. This cost will differ between farms and it includes the direct

costs of petrol; labour; tractor/ mower repair and maintenance; depreciation or the capital cost in case extra machinery is required. There is also the potential cost of wasted pasture.

About the experiment

The experiment at LURDF which started in October and will run through to February 2017, will help farmers determine the costs and benefits of pre-graze mowing. Preliminary results will be published as the trial progresses with a final report available in June 2017.

		Pre-grazing cover	
		Low - 2900kg DM/ha	High - 3500kg DM/ha
Harvesting	Grazing		
	Mowing		

To test the theory an experiment with four treatments, with two replicates has been designed (eight individual farmlets in total). The treatments are shown in the diagram above.

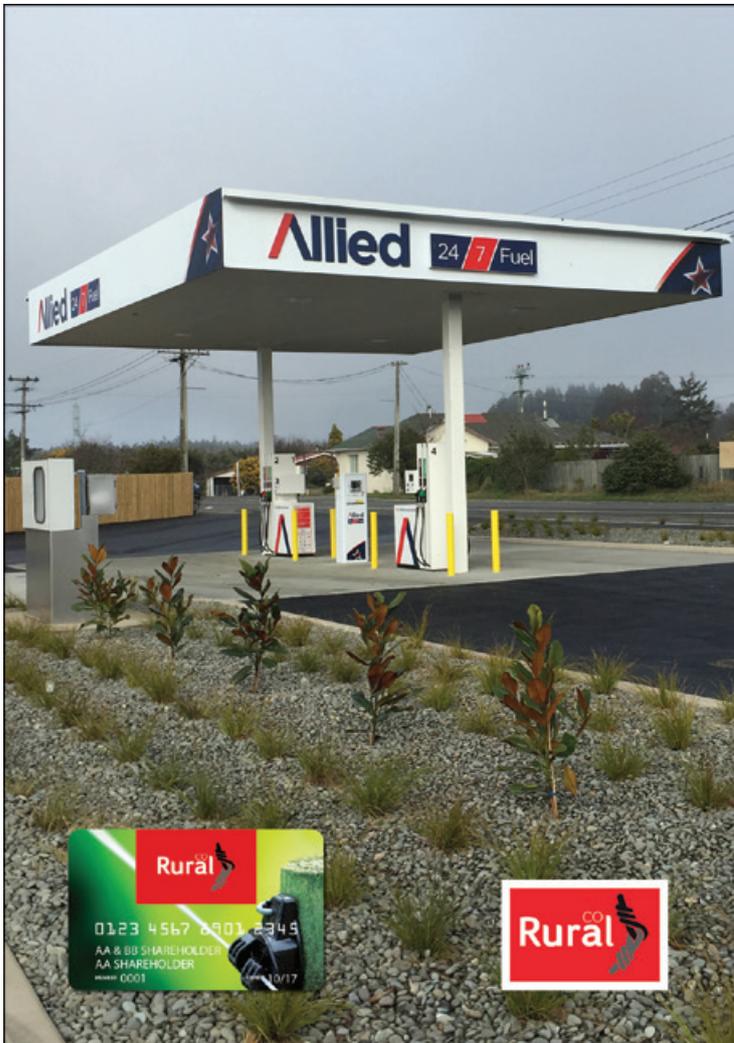
The data in the table below will be collected during the experiment.

Like any tool in the toolbox, pre-graze mowing needs to be used for the right reasons and in the right way. To make the correct decision about when to use this practice or not, we need to know its costs as well as its effect on DM intake, animal performance and pasture growth and utilization. This experiment will help clarify some of these questions to help farmers make decisions.

To find out about the trial data as it progresses you can subscribe for a weekly update on the DairyNZ website on the following link www.dairynz.co.nz/graze-mow-trial.

TABLE 1: Data being collected in the experiment

DAILY	WEEKLY	OTHER
Individual cow milk volume and liveweight	Farm walk/pasture covers	Fortnightly BCS scoring
Time required to mow	Feed wedge	Tiller plugs at the start and end of the experiment
	Growth rate	Grazing behaviour from SensOor eartags
	Pre- and post- grazing pasture cover for each paddock (+ pictures)	
	Refused pasture in mown paddocks and silage	
	DM intake (from pre and post covers)	
	Pasture botanical composition (from standing and mown pasture)	
	Pasture nutritive value	
	Individual cow milk composition	



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Holiday travelling covered by Ruralco fuel network

No matter where you are heading around New-Zealand these summer holidays, you are sure to be able to fuel up with Ruralco. WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGE BY DON JOSEPH



There are more than 380 fuel sites throughout the North and South Islands where you can use your Ruralco Card or your Ruralco Mobilcard, and that number is set to grow with a number of new sites coming on track over the next few months.

In recent weeks Z garages at Twizel, Riccarton Road and Yaldhurst in Christchurch, and Kaiapoi have been taken over by Mobil. Other new sites accepting Ruralco Cards include Allied at Darfield, Cromwell, and Wanaka, and North Island Mobil sites, Matamata and Opotiki.

"There are many more in the pipeline," says Ruralco Fuel Sales Manager, Don Joseph. "As the Ruralco network continues to grow and expands to meet and fulfil the needs of our farming communities, so too does the number of fuel outlets."

South Island cardholders will notice an increase in the number of Mobil outlets as the fuel company continues to invest heavily as it builds its South Island network. As well as new sites, Mobil has also undertaken upgrades at existing sites, including Sydenham in Christchurch and the installation of new diesel pumps at Mobil Ashburton.

"In addition to the extensive fuel network, there will also be some great specials using the Ruralco Card over the Christmas period at a variety of hot spots, so keep an eye out for details closer to the time," says Don.

"As the Ruralco network continues to grow and expands to meet and fulfil the needs of our farming communities, so too does the number of fuel outlets."

Over recent months there have been several specials which have seen 25 cents per litre discount off the pump price. These deals have coincided with Ruralco events such as Instore Days or several of the spring A & P Shows where Ruralco has had a presence. These included Ellesmere, Amberley, Ashburton and more recently the Courtenay A & P Show at Kirwee.

"The great thing with Ruralco fuel prices is that they are off the pump price, so even when you see the pump price has been heavily discounted you will still

receive an additional 12 cents per litre off the discounted price when you get your statement. Ruralco Cardholders generally receive a discount of 12 cents per litre but the savings can be much greater when combined with at pump specials."

"The great thing with Ruralco fuel prices is that they are off the pump price, so even when you see the pump price has been heavily discounted you will still receive an additional 12 cents per litre off the discounted price when you get your statement."

A good example of this can be found when travelling around the North Island. "It is a much more competitive environment up there, so you can experience savings of up to 40 cents per litre," says Don.

He says Ruralco Cardholders get fantastic deals on fuel, especially when compared to other offerings. "Ruralco maximises the discounts we get from the distribution and oil companies and we are very frugal—any profit made goes back to the members. Compared to the bigger players in the industry, we are batting particularly well. I can't think of another card with any better overall pricing than what we offer through Ruralco. Our pricing off the pump and our expanding network is quite substantial."

Some fuel sites, such as those at Methven, Wigram, Amberley, Mayfield and Hornby, also had long term discounts available. "The best way to see what's on offer is to check out the Ruralco website www.ruralco.co.nz or contact me directly. We also have a fuel directory which can also be accessed via the website or by contacting Ruralco on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256)."

For those interested in storing fuel on-farm, the current bulk fuel discount has been up to 33 cents per litre (off Christchurch pump prices). Orders can be placed through Ruralco, and the team can also help with how you store your fuel. "We have Lease To Buy fuel tanks available. Farmers can lease tanks for a period of time, say a couple of years, at a very nominal fee and can look to buy the tanks at the end of the lease period," says Don.

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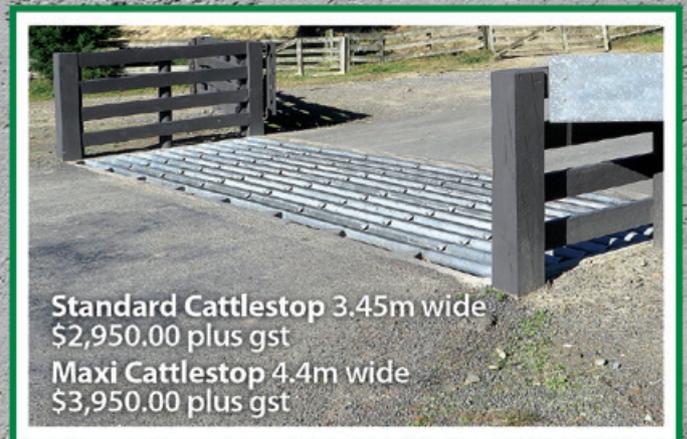
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Fodder beet: A high-octane milking supplement

Fodder beet (FB) has revolutionised the way farmers winter dairy cows in the South Island, but it is now making its name as a key milking supplement for autumn and early spring. WORDS SUPPLIED BY ABACUS BIO



Supplying supplement for the platform to support milk production through autumn can be a challenge, often resulting in the reliance on bought-in feed.

Many dairy farmers in the South Island are now turning to FB to maintain milk production during seasonal feed deficits. Although FB yields vary by region, paddock selection and management, it is widely accepted to be a relatively cheap supplement (7–13 ¢/kgDM) – providing high metabolisable energy (ME) to support strong milk yields.

FB also persists well through dry periods and will maintain quality for long periods in-situ or after lifting. Therefore, it is a very versatile crop which can be consumed over a large grazing window.

Most dairy farms will reduce stocking rates and use supplements to maintain milk production through late summer and autumn. However, rather than using traditional supplements such as pasture silage, which can be time consuming and have a relatively high wastage rate, FB is becoming the preferred option.

A publication by Riley. (2015) concludes that New Zealand dairy farms would benefit by an average of \$70,000 if they used FB rather

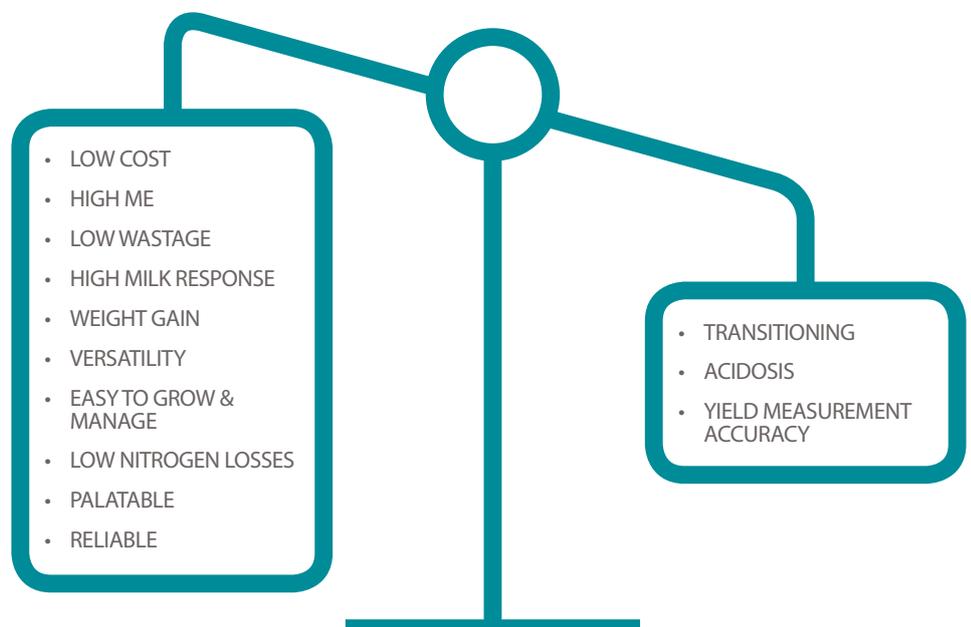
than grain or palm kernel extract through the 2014–15 low pay-out season.

Feeding FB through this period has many advantages, including low cost, high ME, low wastage, high milk response, weight gain, versatile, easy to grow and manage, and lower nitrogen losses.

It is fast becoming fundamental in providing farmers a high-octane feed that is versatile and enhances milk production at any time of the year. FB is low in crude protein, which is why it can only make up a small proportion (4–5kg) of a milking cow's diet. However, this makes it the perfect feed to offer alongside quality pasture.

DairyNZ has a strong emphasis on meeting body condition score targets to promote animal production and reproductive performance. FB can play a major role in meeting these targets while maintaining a relatively low cost and profitable system.

FIGURE 1: *Advantages and disadvantages of feeding fodder beet to promote milk production*



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The science behind an egg a day

The modern layer bird originates from the original red jungle fowl (*Gallus domesticus*) and has the capacity to produce nearly 260 eggs a year (i.e. nearly 9 eggs every 10 days).

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY CENTRAL STOCKFEEDS ON BEHALF OF NUTRITECH INTERNATIONAL

Eggs are packed with nutrients including protein, fat, vitamins and minerals. The nutrients found in the egg are a direct correlation to what she eats on a daily basis. Therefore, in order for a bird to lay an egg a day with a suitable egg size, she needs to be provided with the correct nutrients, in sufficient quantity and in the correct balance.

In general, the first limiting nutrient in laying birds is energy. In the wild, the birds would have scratched for seeds, insects and grubs. Today we supply energy in the form of grains—wheat, barley and/or maize. In addition, fats or vegetable oils are also added to increase the energy of the diet. Birds have a gizzard which allows them to grind up grains into smaller particles for digestion. It's important that free range birds have access to small stones or grit to allow the gizzard to work optimally. This energy is often referred to as AME (Apparent Metabolisable Energy) primarily and is the energy available to the bird for maintaining bodyweight and producing eggs.

Protein makes up a significant portion of the egg, which is why it's such a sought after food in the consumer market. We need to provide protein in the birds diet so it can be metabolised into protein in the egg. The building blocks of protein

are amino acids and it's important that birds are provided the correct quantity and balance of the essential amino acids. These amino acids are provided from plant protein sources (eg: soyabean, peas meal), animal proteins (eg: meat and bonemeal) and synthetic amino acids (eg: methionine). The availability and price of these protein sources determines which sources are the most cost-effective. Most of the protein consumed is diverted to egg production and feather growth. Often, poor feather growth or low egg size is a sign of poor amino acid intake.

The minerals required for laying birds are split between macro minerals (eg: calcium and phosphorous) and trace minerals (eg: zinc, copper). Calcium is extremely important for ensuring good egg shell quality. Sources of calcium include limestone which are normally added into layer diets to provide a source of calcium. In addition, we can provide birds free choice access to oyster shell grit or large limestone particles to allow the birds to regulate their calcium intake.

Trace minerals need to be provided in a layer diet as they are important co-factors in many of the enzyme systems which control digestion of nutrients. In addition, they are important in



ABOVE: Central Stockfeeds store

shell formation and bird health. Vitamins are also important nutrients that need to be added and play important roles in animal health and egg production. An example is vitamin D which needs to be included in a layer diet to ensure good shell formation and bone growth.

The basic principles of good layer nutrition are to ensure the bird receives the correct quantities and balance of energy, protein and minerals in the diet and to ensure birds have access to good quality feed. This includes ensuring feed is kept dry and presented fresh as practically as possible. In more recent times, research has indicated that good bird health is related to good gut health, thereby allowing birds to produce good quality eggs. Feed supplements that can aid the bird in achieving good gut health include organic acids, probiotics, pre-biotics and essential oils.

Feeds provided to laying birds need to be scientifically formulated by qualified animal nutritionists to ensure the correct balance of nutrients is provided. It's therefore important to purchase your poultry meal from reputable feed suppliers.

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One-stop shop for plumbing, gas specialists

The smoko room is a whole lot noisier at Arthur Cates these days.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES BY MARY-ANNE MARTIN



The long-established plumbing, gas and radiator business now has all its staff at the same location at the Riverside Industrial Estate.

The plumbing department's move in June this year from Burnett Street ended Cates' 60-year presence in Ashburton's central business district but now means all services are under the one roof on the corner of McNally and Robinson streets.

Arthur Cates has a 100-year history in Mid Canterbury with a huge range of expertise covering plumbing, water pumps and domestic irrigation to automotive radiator repairs, LPG gas home and water heating systems, gas refilling and welding supplies.

The business had its beginnings back in 1908 when Arthur Cates, a former teacher and gas works employee, decided to start his own plumbing and gas fitting business operating out of small premises in Havelock Street. It grew rapidly and within a few years was operating out of a larger shop in Burnett Street.

In 1948 Arthur died, leaving his sons Tom and Arthur (always known as AV) the business; it is now run by AV's son Daryl.

With Ashburton's CBD now undergoing major renovations, the plumbing department's relocation made sense. The corner site in the industrial estate is nearly half a hectare and now incorporates a new admin and retail showroom, and a bigger smoko room for the nine staff.

Daryl said a new LPG filling station installed there had actually resulted in a price drop for the gas,

which Arthur Cates was now able to sell for around \$3 per kg, down from \$3.44 prior to the move.

The business delivers 45kg refills around the district to domestic, commercial and industrial customers, but Ruralco Cardholders looking to refill gas cylinders for the summer barbecue season can pop in for a refill too and take advantage of the cheap rate.

There is plenty of carparking space with the entrance off McNally Street and the exit via Robinson Street.

Daryl said farmers who used gas to power grain-drying facilities should make sure their supplies were topped up before the harvest started. Arthur Cates can also do safety appraisals of gas bottles during refilling.

Cates also hire out large portable gas heaters, for when the weather just isn't playing ball at your special event.

They can also repair gas appliances like bird scarers, camp cookers, tailing docking irons and calf dehorners.

Their core work has remained unchanged over the years and that is the business of plumbing supplies and servicing: they supply tapware and spares, hot water cylinders, toilet pans,



ABOVE: The LPG filling station installed actually resulted in a price drop for the gas

ABOVE TOP: The corner site in the industrial estate is nearly half a hectare and now incorporates a new admin and retail showroom, and a bigger smoko room for the nine staff

MAIN IMAGE: The business delivers 45kg refills around the district to domestic, commercial and industrial customers

valves, clips, butynol, plastic and copper pipes, downpipes, water pumps and more. Their plumbers carry out repairs and maintenance on homes, farms and commercial buildings, and for new installs they can work out the most efficient and cost-effective way to supply water around the home, to stock, gardens and dairy sheds. Their experience is second to none and their staff know Mid Canterbury conditions.

Plastic welding is also another sideline that has been developed. While repairing car radiators staff noticed damaged or broken grills so began repairing them with welding plastic. With so many things now made of plastic, Cates now repair a huge range of objects like motorcycle mudguards, plastic fittings and large tanks.

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BRANCHES THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH ISLAND

Far side of world reignites passion for cropping



IMAGE: The family made the move to Rakata in 2005, with two young sons aged 10 and 11.

Leaving your farm, your friends and your country to move half way around the world to continue doing what you love is not for the faint hearted, but was a move driven as much by passion as it was by frustration for Gerald Kidner.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

A crop farmer all his life, along with his wife Melody and two sons farmed a 315ha family property in East Anglia, expansive countryside known for its cropping operations and picturesque landscapes close to England's east coast.

But the post card landscape belied an increasingly difficult and frustrating farming environment.

Gerald and his peers were finding themselves under siege to ever mounting piles of compliance paperwork, making them feel more like box ticking bureaucrats than the committed, passionate cropping farmers they are.

"If you were to think compliance issues here in New Zealand are tough, in the United Kingdom it was ten times worse, and it was only getting more so, and this was over a decade ago," says Gerald.

Rules around how often hedges were to be cut, when drains could be dug, what parts of the farm had to be left fallow exemplified a system that had become a monster of soul sapping bureaucracy with little sign of changing that left farmers "very much at the bottom of the pile."

Rather than trying to fight the system Gerald had begun thinking of other places he and his family could farm and live.

In 2003 he and Melody paid a visit to New Zealand, travelling the length of both islands, eventually winding up in Ashburton.



The decision to make a life changing move came, as it sometimes does, over a drink and a conversation.

"We ended up talking to a cropping farmer in a pub in Ashburton and he invited us out the next day to have a look over his place. He even showed us his profit and loss accounts, and it made what we were doing at home with the subsidies and applications for funding seem almost a farcical form of farming. This was what I had started farming to do, to grow crops, and sell them at harvest, just what this bloke was doing."

"The decision to make a life changing move came, as it sometimes does, over a drink and a conversation."

When they got back to the UK, farmers were hit with another wave of EU legislation and consequent form filling that germinated the seed of an idea Gerald had while in Ashburton. He phoned some friends to talk about moving down and buying a farm and they encouraged

ABOVE: Gerald is warily eyeing the pea weevil outbreak in Wairarapa, with concern that the pest may have been carried into the Canterbury region
BELOW: With the pea crop getting close to harvest, Gerald and Tom quality check the progress of their product

him to jump on another flight, head back and see what was on offer.

"We met everyone we needed to, the solicitors, accountants, rural agents and bankers but could not find the farm we wanted so I headed back home."

He had not been back home long and he got the call that would change the family's life.

"There was a good farm going on the market, but we had to be in because several people were keen on it, in fact a friend said if we didn't buy it, he would!"

With that they purchased in short time the 262ha property west of Rakaia, on the deeply silted terrace country that proves ideal for cropping. It was land that was to recapture Gerald's passion for growing good crops to harvest and earn a "real" income from.

"I always viewed the country around here as some of the best arable land in the world. It has deep glacial silt loam topsoil that goes down 15–20m, with excellent water holding capacity, it does not compact, and is a kind soil to crop as it requires very little preparation."

It was a big shift from the heavy East Anglia clay soils that required intensive ploughing and cultivation, were tough on equipment and terrible to try and work or even drive upon over wet periods.

"We would be always hard facing the cultivation equipment with welds. You would find after a morning's work you would have to change the points over, they wore out very quickly.

"The one difference here that was tough was the wind—being close to the gorge we cop the nor'westers here. I think Melody wanted to move back to the UK after the first summer's worth. You do have to watch how you cultivate and manage the soil without losing it to the wind."





The property had consent for two deep well pumps which Gerald soon put in after purchase, drawing water from 150m deep through a lateral irrigation system that can deliver more precise water volumes than centre pivot type systems. He tests water quality every year, confirming the low nitrogen levels it contains.

Making the move with two young sons aged 10 and 11 and themselves being in their early 50s when friends and social networks are well established was not an easy one. They make a point of revisiting every year for several weeks.

“It’s a stage of life where you don’t easily make new friends, but we have managed to build a network now, and we have had many of our friends from the UK come out to visit, some two or three times.”

He admits many would not have had the nerve to do what they did. “And there have been days when I have been bent into a howling nor’wester wondering what it was we did. But then you get those days in spring when the crops are coming through looking good, and you are glad you made the move when you did.”

Gerald appreciates the forgiving nature of the deep silt he grows a variety of crops including sugar beet, wheat, barley and peas upon, and keeps cultivation to a minimum.

“The beauty with peas is often you can double crop them in one season.”

When they purchased the farm they were growing significant areas of clover and ryegrass for seed, but weather conditions with late hail and strong winds made it a particularly challenging crop to grow consistently.

Contracts for small seed growing are becoming increasingly hard to get as supply shifts to China, and the Kidners are keenly considering growing a commercial hemp crop. Yields and returns are good in Canterbury, and the soil would be well suited on Gerald’s farm to the crop.

Today vining peas form a significant part of the crop rotation, grown on contract for Watties, while wheat and barley are grown for open market sale.

“The beauty with peas is often you can double crop them in one season. The returns may not be the highest but the ability to get two crops makes up for that, and this country is well suited, it drains well and you don’t get foot rot problems with the crop.”

He is warily eyeing the pea weevil outbreak in Wairarapa and is concerned about reports the pea straw from the crops there may have ended up carrying the pest into the Canterbury region.



LEFT: The vining peas form a significant part of the crop rotation, grown on contract for Watties

ABOVE LEFT: Tom appreciates the kind soil they have landed upon at Rakaia

The growth in popularity of sugar beet has also proven another component to Gerald's cropping plan. He grew the beet back home in the UK, and finds lifting them far easier on the alluvial Canterbury soil, compared to the heavy Anglia clay.

"It would become a major operation on the heavier soil, here we can drive trucks in easily."

The beet are supplied on contract to a contractor who in turn supplies dairy farmers with it. While the Kidner property would prove an appealing piece of land to convert to dairying, it is not in Gerald's plans.

"The returns for arable are tight, but I enjoy getting crops in the ground, growing them through and then the freedom of being able to sell them on the open market—that ability is something that just seemed to disappear over time back home."

Another less common crop he has also grown is borage. The oil extracted from it is used in the cosmetic industry and proves a good follow on crop. Rapeseed is another option he has tried, but high winds can quickly inflict crop losses upon it. When Gerald and Melody decided to build their own home on the farm a nearby copse of older trees seemed an ideal spot. But it also bought something of a mystery to the farm.

"Digging out for foundations we found the remains of about 10 chimney foundations, and iron bark piles from what must have been a pretty substantial place. The strange thing was, no one locally seemed to know anything about the place that used to be there, whether it was a big home or a hostelry for people crossing the river."

Tipping their hats to this mysterious dwelling, the couple have built a home often confused as being one of Canterbury's stately old homesteads, when in fact it's only a few years old.



"We built it in Georgian style with white cornering Oamaru stone and bricks we had to source from Australia—it seems people do confuse it with something much older than it really is."

With one of their sons, Tom, at home for now the couple feel they have made a connection with Canterbury that will last, with Gerald relishing the freedom to do what he's passionate about. He also brings a cautionary note to the future Kiwi farmers may face, based upon his UK experiences.

"I know we need to have rules around farming and how we work in the environment. But my concern is how these rules are set, how they are enforced and what it can mean for farmers who so often end up at the bottom of the heap as the whipping boy for what the public and bureaucrats may think they want."

Canterbury delivers for next generation

Coming to New Zealand as an 11 and 10 year old boys Tom Kidner and his brother Sam thought they had landed in a giant outdoor playground. Already firm farm boys, they relished a landscape that provided plenty of outdoors opportunities with the Southern Alps on their back step and the Rakaia River even closer.

The boys quickly fitted into the Canterbury rural scene, attending primary school at Ashburton before going to Christs College in Christchurch. For Tom the next move was to Lincoln University to study a Bachelor of Agriculture.

"I had always thought I would move further away to study, but having Lincoln right there with excellent agricultural courses meant I ended up staying closer to home than I expected." Meantime Sam studied science at Canterbury University, specialising in geology. While Sam works in Canada, Tom has recently returned from the UK, and appreciates the contrasts in farming here and there.



ABOVE: The Kidners relish the New Zealand landscape and are happy to call it home

TOP: Standing in front of their beautiful Georgian style house, with family dog Tara

LEFT: The growth in popularity of sugar beet has also proven another component of the cropping plan

"In the UK farming has much more of a social construct around it, it's just not as rural anymore as New Zealand is. Working on farms over there has also been great, seeing how others are practicing farming is good to bring back here and maybe apply some of it."

Like his father Tom appreciates the kind soil they have landed upon at Rakaia.

"I know at home for a farm the same size we would have needed two full time staff just for the extra cultivation work required. Here it's a self-contained operation, we run it ourselves. The wind will always be a limitation for grain growing, it's hard to get good grain fill. However we do get the upside of about 15 metres of really good fertile topsoil, which gives us some good cropping options."



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Digital vs Paper: What the future holds for farm Health & Safety management

‘Henry Ford once remarked, if I’d asked them what they’d wanted they’d have said, faster horses.’ WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY MARK ORR, ZERO HARM FARM



Picture this. I’m sure you can:

“You’re a responsible farm manager. You care about your own safety and that of your farm employees and visiting contractors.

You’re also aware new Health and Safety (H&S) at Work legislation came into effect in April 2016 with a focus not only on improving safety culture in New Zealand businesses, but also in raising the bar on penalties imposed on those who pay it scant regard.

It’s the school holidays and you’re away with the family for a couple of days R&R. You’re sure the team on the farm can cope. But out of the blue the irrigation pump for one of the centre pivots goes on the fritz. You call Bill, your electrical contractor. Sweet, he can send out Gary, his new apprentice asap.

Now Gary hasn’t been to your farm and doesn’t really know where he’s heading. It’s also been raining heavily and track around to the pump shed will be pretty greasy. Wally, one of the share milker’s workers, nearly came a cropper there last month after 15 mls.

You know the guys aren’t going to be around when Gary arrives. You’ve called him and left a message about the track conditions, but you’re not sure if Gary’s received it.

Actually, it would have been great to clearly show him where he’s supposed to access the property and go over the all the other hazards he might stumble upon on his way out to the pump. You wonder if Wally has had time to fill in that trench he’d been digging in paddock six, you hope Gary doesn’t head out that way.

You know it’d be good practice to have Gary do a safety induction and to have him sign in and out—that’s why you had that expensive farm safety audit done last year. There’s a big folder underneath the office PC monitor with all that guff inside. You wonder if Wally could ride the four wheeler out and leave the folder by the front gate? You’re hoping if he can, he has waterproof paper...”

Paper: it’s been a well tested medium for recording every type of historic occurrence for a millennium. Always there, always available. But it’s not always a practical or productive method of recording vital information in the field, especially in a farming environment.

With the advent of new technologies and rapid improvements in mobile broadband coverage, there are numerous innovative companies like who now provide easy to use digital solutions for the very real productivity problem of:

- How to effectively manage my legislated Health and Safety commitments on farm?
- How do paper and the digital methods compare?

Our Health and Safety at Work regulator, Worksafe, emphasise the importance of accurate record keeping in any effective health and safety system.

Paper based systems almost always require someone to be physically present to complete a contractor induction. It requires a central place (your kitchen?) for them to call into, which, in reality, no busy farm operation can practically “man” all the time.

Paper is bulky, can be inaccessible, requires physical storage, deteriorates over time, entries can be illegible and just doesn’t work on farm, in a day to day, practical sense. The outcome is a well intended but useless Health and Safety system tucked neatly in a folder which gathers dust and is never actioned because it is too unwieldy to use.

Digital Health and Safety systems on the other hand are, if mobile broadband access is good, always available. They’re easily accessed by everyone, can be used to create farm maps, easily communicate all hazards, pinpoints additional farm information and provides clear contact details of farm managers. All great ways to improve productivity.

Online systems can effectively and securely store data, can be used to analysis and report H&S records and provide 24hr access to various sources of hazchem/employee training records.

They can also smoothly produce incidents reports on the fly (with images), construct serious harm hazards registers and record tool box meetings.

They’re also handy in posting temporary hazards, like the greasy track example we wanted to warn Gary the apprentice about, so farm managers can be sure contractors and visitors alike are able to be notified of fixed and out of the ordinary hazards.

Most importantly, mobile solutions promote farm managers to actively use a health and safety system through ease of use. The flow on effect is better communication, compliance and of course, everyone’s overarching goal, clear improvements in farm safety culture in general.

Henry Ford once remarked, if I’d asked them what they’d wanted they’d have said, faster horses”. In the battle of digital vs paper, ultimately the market will decide. Old world or new world? Personally, I reckon the day of faster horses, in the record keeping sense, is well and truly over.

Mark Orr is the General Manager of Zero Harm Farm, an online provider of simple, mobile and paperless systems to assist farmers in creating a better safety culture on farm and making H&S compliance easy.



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Justin Bennett is a life-saver in his work uniform or after hours as a volunteer firefighter.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES BY JASON MCKENZIE



A working partner of Martin Bennett Hydraulics, he gets farm machines back in action and has been a trusted advisor in his trade around Mid Canterbury for nearly three decades.

His experience is hard to beat and he has built a new business has just joined the Ruralco stable of suppliers.

Justin started in the hydraulics industry with Cookes after doing an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner with Burnetts Transport—the culture of repair, repair, repair has stuck. It is still his first option on a callout and invariably means a better deal for customers.

He was at Cookes for 25 years, 15 as a mobile operator visiting farms and other rural businesses to sort their hydraulic issues, and 9 as manager. When the Ashburton branch closed, he worked as a rep for the company in South Canterbury.

Then came an offer he couldn't refuse from Allan and Shane Martin and, over a cup of coffee and an A4 piece of paper, they became partners in Martin Bennett Hydraulics and he was back on the road putting his expertise to good use.

The company is the largest privately owned hydraulic servicing business in Christchurch. They direct import their hydraulic hoses, fittings and components from top European manufacturer Walvoil. The Walvoil gear is perfect for industrial and agriculture uses so well suited to New Zealand conditions.

Justin said large farming and earthmoving equipment were core business for him and fellow service technician Wayne Drake. Drake was an aircraft engineer for the fleet air arm in the Royal Navy before moving to New Zealand, where he worked at Hinds Mechanical.

"He's a huge asset for us. He used to work on harrier jump jets, so he's very good with all things mechanical."

Justin's own experience is also another drawcard for customers. He has worked all over the region on a vast range of machinery, across the agricultural and industrial landscape.

The aim, always, is to provide top service. If a machine breaks down, Justin and Wayne work very hard to have it up and running as quickly as possible. Both men have mobile workshops and in nine out of ten callouts, they can fix the problem in the field. If not, the issue can be sorted at Martin Bennett's Moore Street workshop.

The Moore Street store also has a retail shop which sells lifting equipment, including synthetic slings and D-shackles and other

ABOVE: Martin Bennet Van on farm
ABOVE TOP: Martin Bennett Hydraulics retail shop located on Moore Street
MAIN IMAGE: Wayne Drake and Justin Bennett

components for high tensile lifting such as level blocks and chain blocks.

Martin Bennett also sells wire ropes, 3–10mm, for post drivers, sheep ramps, augers and winches (for vehicles and irrigators).

Justin and Wayne can also design hydraulic systems. "Everyone has a different idea of what they want. That's the beauty of our service, we design a system around what they require."

If something more complicated is required, Justin has access to the expert knowledge at Martin's engineering department in Christchurch.

With harvest just around the corner, Justin is advising farmers to do a visual check on their harvest machinery before they start using it—Martin Bennett can also do a more thorough system check if needed.



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Timing right for retiring ATS Chair

Eighteen years ago when Phil McKendry was first elected to the ATS Board of Directors, his wife Jude sat at the back of the room during the AGM with their second child, baby Tom.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY

Fast forward to the present day, and that baby has just completed secondary school. All three of Phil and Jude's children—Ella (20), Tom (18) and George (16)—have always known their Dad to be at ATS meetings, but that's about to change as Phil stands down from a job he has loved to make way for others to join the ATS and Ruralco success story.

"I told my fellow Directors three years ago it would be my last term, so they have known about it for some time. It was a deliberate decision on my part. Part of signalling my resignation decision came from looking at how long I had been at ATS and from looking at the talent around the Board table and the business strategy at the time. Three years on and the strategy is even more evolved, with a new CEO and management team in place. It further confirms my earlier decision and is a good time for me to leave with the business in such good heart."

When Phil joined the Board in 1998 he was the youngest there by about 15 years. "In those days it ran the risk of being an old man's board." But it has adapted and moved with the times and is now a much more diverse group by way of age, gender, ethnicity and backgrounds. Today there are three women on the Board, including an independent Director, and at 54, Phil is the second-to-oldest seated around the table.

The emphasis and expectations on governance delivery has developed over recent years, especially since the GFC, and while Phil believes ATS has always been well served, the age and backgrounds of the latest generation of Directors mean they have real diversity of thinking on the board. But it is the skills and experience they bring as individuals that is important, not just gender, ethnicity or age. And the younger members are quite deliberate and strategic about their careers as directors. "ATS has successfully attracted high calibre Directors who are looking for a challenge to match their diverse skills. It gives me a lot of confidence going forward," says Phil.

During his early years on the Board, there were a number of other trading societies around, especially in the South Island but since then many have merged or fallen by the wayside, while ATS sustained its independence.

"We have always thought we could deliver better value by remaining independent and not merging, and that has been one of the ongoing themes throughout the years."

"That strategy has been reinforced following the introduction of the Ruralco Card. It has allowed ATS to stay independent and focus on delivering value for our members while others got caught up in a rush for scale and are subsumed into national scale offerings. While there have been ongoing debates around mergers over the years, we have ended up remaining independent for our shareholders and they have retained extra leverage upon their farm supplies market."

Another constant has been the co-operative's ability to stay true to its original purpose of lowering input costs for farmers. "I call it 'keeping the faith'. We are a lean, nimble and cost effective buying group still lowering costs for farmers and it's as much of a focus now as it was for the first dozen farmers who met in Jack Brand's living room to discuss the formation of ATS over 50 years ago."

There have been many highs during Phil's time on the board. "My story as Chair over the last five years has been about strategy, overcoming our geographical constraints and growing our business beyond our bricks and mortar."

This has largely been achieved through the development of Ruralco and has allowed ATS to grow from a geographically constrained, store based and local business to a co-operative buying group with a regional base and, via the Ruralco Card, a nationwide reach. Ruralco now boasts over 2,500 suppliers throughout New Zealand, efficiently achieved by utilising modern technologies and without relying on costly building, inventory and staffing infrastructures. The Ruralco brand is continuing to grow and is set to become even more prevalent throughout the marketplace.

Other highs have included the introduction of independent directors on the Board and the appointment of two CEOs. "As a Director, this is the biggest job you will do and I believe we have managed to do it well both times."

Another highlight has been the growth and development of staff within the business. "In our last round of management appointments, all were made internally. This is very heartening as it shows we have talent within our ranks to grow."

"We have a good culture in the business—our people are really good and they all contribute in their own ways. Our staff surveys have backed this up and show huge levels of engagement."

"Our type of business is 'high touch' because we have lots of contact with our members. This level of interaction has led to ATS investing heavily in the HR side of its business and in people skills. Traditionally in business this is called the 'soft stuff', but for ATS it's one of its key advantages. "Having that contact and nimbleness by having the right people with the right skills and support is key to our success. It means the co-operative is close to its member's farm businesses, understands them, and wants to contribute to their farming competitiveness

and success. Put another way, it means that our members know they deserve the extra competition and value that come from having their own local co-operative dedicated to lowering the costs of their farm inputs. In other words, the members buy why ATS does what it does."

Phil says ATS has also earned respect across the wider rural supplies market by remaining true to purpose. "We do our job well and, hopefully, with dignity. Remaining true to purpose and acting in line with our values means we can operate effectively and efficiently across a range of external environments."

When Phil first joined the ATS Board, he always had in mind the goal of developing an off farm career, complemented by time on the 200 hectare family farm, Farnmacallan, at Lyndhurst. Phil is the fourth generation on the farm, which is primarily a mixed cropping and lamb finishing operation. The farm name comes from the area in the north-eastern most corner of Ireland where the McKendry family originates.

Juggling board work, farming and family has been a balancing act Phil has worked hard to achieve. His children have always known him to be a part time farmer whose work is spread across the farm and his office. To do this, he engaged staff and contractors to carry out farm work and it's a formula which has worked for him.

"Farming gives you a lot of time on your own. Spending time on the farm gives me time, and head space, to reflect on the board room. For me, that was part of making it work. I don't want to do the same thing all of the time—I enjoy the diversity doing the meetings and also having space to myself."

Running and skiing are other passions which contribute to Phil's life balance. "I go for a run in the morning—it's my mental break time." He has also taken part in marathons and half marathons, but is quick to point out he partakes these days, rather than competes. "I like skiing as well and all the family tries to make the most of its season's passes."

Prior to ATS, Phil's first substantive governance experience was starting up Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation, in conjunction with fellow Mid Cantabrian, Brian Cameron. Phil went on to become the scheme's founding Chair. "Out of that I was encouraged to stand for the ATS Board. This was a more public step to a bigger entity. From that I also joined the Board of Electricity Ashburton in 2007." He is currently Deputy Chair and has just started another three year term on that Board.

He is also on the Board of Trustees for Our Lady of the Snows School at Methven. It's his second stint, giving him a total of almost 14 years' service to the school. "Over time the focus and themes change but there has always been a lot of training on offer. I think Tomorrow's Schools is producing a lot of people with good skills in governance. It gives many a meaningful first exposure to governance and some move on from there."

Standing down from ATS will leave a big gap in Phil's calendar, but at this stage he is deliberately not committing to anything else—"Governance is not everyone's cup of tea, but I have enjoyed it and I will be quite deliberate about growing and developing any future roles. I still have plenty on the go with the farm and my EA responsibilities."

"I have wanted to be able to put 100% commitment into ATS, right up to my last day."



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Putting the K in cropping ... or not

Ignore Quick Test K results at your cost when side-dressing summer crops.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



New Zealand soils generally have good supplies of potassium (K). Where K hasn't been replaced over time, levels can drop below optimum. However, it is important to consider crop requirements and soil test information before you add it to summer side-dressings.

"Potassium is vital for plant growth and needs to be available when plants are taking up nitrogen to keep the plant's 'electrical engine' in balance," says Ballance Science Extension Officer, Aimee Robinson. "Deficiency shows as yellowing or 'scorching' in older leaves and stalks become brittle and may lodge easily."

Where K has been mined over time, applying fertiliser K can be a good idea, providing the crop needs it. Soils with coarse textures are more likely to be deficient in K due to leaching losses. On such soils, applying K little and often can be beneficial.

K and common summer crops

Brassicas have very low potassium requirements. "Unless your Quick Test K results are below three, research shows that applying K will have little impact on final yield. You are better off focusing your investment on nitrogen, using a product like Sustain to protect against volatilisation losses in summer conditions," says Aimee. "If your potassium levels have dropped below recommended levels, applying K in a base

dressing or as a side dressing will prevent a deficiency."

Fodder beet has a higher demand for potassium. "However, common applications of potassium—and sodium—to New Zealand-grown fodder beet are possibly much higher than they need to be," says Aimee.

Studies done with Plant & Food Research found that applying high rates of potassium and sodium when Quick Test K and Quick Test Na were at 4 or above did not benefit yield. Table 1 below outlines Ballance's recommendations based on available research.

Ballance is also currently involved in a Sustainable Farming Fund project, which hopes to better understand potassium and nitrogen timings on fodder beet.

Maize illustrates another side of the potassium story. Maize is a particularly hardy crop. A potassium deficiency is only likely where soil is

fundamentally low in K and has been cropped for a number of years. If Quick Test K results are low you may need to supply some K to ensure you won't run into a deficit. "But be careful," warns Aimee "If K is available, maize will take up more than it needs. This is known as luxury uptake and while it doesn't affect growth or yield, it does have a negative consequence for the quality of the resulting feed. Excess K in feed can cause problems such as milk fever and staggers if fed in early lactation."

"You may need to replace lost K after harvest, but don't be tempted to pre-empt this by factoring post-harvest losses into side-dressings. You are better to add it to the base dressing of the next crop," says Aimee.

Your ATS or Ballance specialist can help with soil testing and planning the best way to manage potassium levels on your farm, so contact ATS today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

TABLE 1: K and Na fertiliser recommendations for fodder beet crops based on soil Quick Test levels (MOP = muriate of potash [50% K], NaCl = salt [40% Na])

	QT Na < 4	QT Na > 4
QT K < 4	100-200 kg MOP/ha 50-100 kg NaCl/ha	100-200 kg MOP/ha 0-50 kg NaCl/ha
QT K > 4	50-100 kg MOP/ha 50-100 kg NaCl/ha	50-100 kg MOP/ha 0-50 kg NaCl/ha

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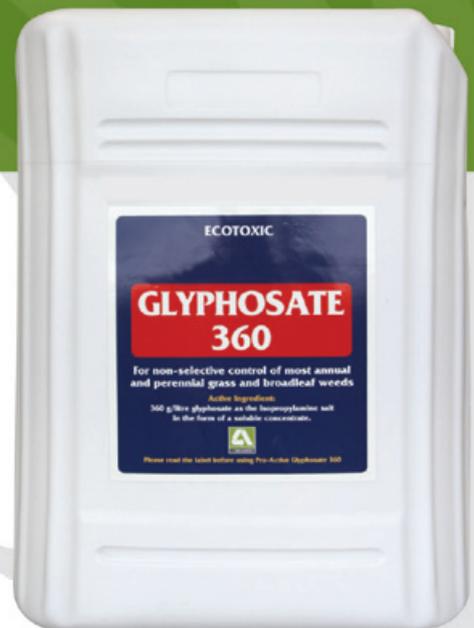
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Cyrex Liquid protects against flystrike for up to 12 weeks and provides knockdown control of maggots and lice in one, easy application. With a unique mode of action and no known field resistance, Cyrex Liquid is deadly on even resistant strains¹ of flies, maggots and lice, yet is easy on animals and workers with a favourable safety profile.² Purchase 1 x 10 L or 2 x 5 L Cyrex Liquid and you'll receive a free LEATHERMAN REV multi-function tool worth \$89.90 rrp.



References: 1. Levot, G. & Sales, N. Proc. Australian Sheep Veterinarians Gold Coast Conference, May 2006, pp144-149. 2. Extinosad Jetting Fluid /Flystrike Dressing for Sheep in Long Wool Technical Manual Version 1.30/11/00. Elanco Animal Health (For internal use only). Cyrex Liquid contains 12.5 g/L spinosad and 500 g/L cyromazine. Registered pursuant to the ACVM Act 1997 (No. A09917). Registered to Elanco Animal Health, Division of Eli Lilly and Company (NZ) Ltd., Level 1, 123 Ormiston Road, Botany Junction, Auckland 2016. LEATHERMAN™ and REV™ are trademarks of Leatherman Tool Group, Inc. Elanco, Cyrex™, and the diagonal bar are trademarks owned or licensed by Eli Lilly and Company, its subsidiaries or affiliates. ©2016 Elanco Animal Health, a division of Eli Lilly and Company. EAH16165HPC NZSH-PXE00017

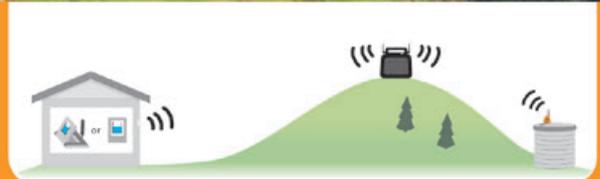
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Cyductin® Oral for Sheep for better performance

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



Cyductin Oral contains moxidectin, the most potent member of the macrocyclic lactone (ML) family of drenches. This family kills parasites by binding to the glutamate-gated chloride channels in the cell membranes, resulting in a flaccid paralysis, followed by death of the parasite.

Moxidectin is the most lipophilic (fat-loving) of all the MLs. It's this fat-loving nature of moxidectin, combined with the way Cyductin Oral is formulated, that gives it the ability to stay in the animal's body and continue to kill incoming larvae (i.e. persistent activity) for longer than other oral drenches.

What does this mean for you?

The increased length of action has three major benefits:

1. BETTER PERFORMANCE: Sheep do not have to expend energy dealing with incoming parasites, therefore this energy can be used for growth. A trial comparing the growth rate of lambs treated with Cyductin Oral compared to a short acting drench showed that lambs were able to grow at least 60% faster¹.

2. LESS WORM BUILD-UP ON PASTURE:

Reducing egg contamination, means other stock classes are less exposed, so they will perform better with less worm challenge.

3. POTENTIAL TO INCREASE DRENCHING INTERVAL:

The prolonged action of Cyductin Oral against key production-limiting parasites (Ostertagia and Barber's pole) allows you to vary the drenching interval from 4-6 weeks, when conditions and parasite burdens allow. This means lambs may be yarded less often, reducing workload and the risk of pneumonia. Less drenching also reduces the total amount of drench used, and the cost of the drenching programme.

When to use Cyductin?

Many farmers use a double combination tape drench as their first drench around weaning. This is done to treat for tape worms but also for animal safety. Drenches containing abamectin are regarded as having a lower margin of safety and may present issues with toxicity in young lambs when drenching across a wide weight range. Cyductin Oral has a wide margin of safety and can be used in lambs at this time. There is a high level of resistance being reported to some double combination products (containing albendazole and levamisole). Data from



Gribbles Vet Pathology laboratories² report that over 30% of faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) samples contain parasites that are resistant to this double combination. The same data shows that only 15% of samples show resistance to moxidectin. The safety and efficacy of Cyductin Plus Tape may make it a good option at the beginning of a drench programme when tape control is required.

Cyductin Oral is ideal for preventing the build-up of Ostertagia in the summer and early autumn, protecting lambs when the risk of infection is high.

The potential improvement in growth rate achieved due to the prolonged activity of Cyductin Oral can be realised at the beginning of the season, bringing lambs up to weight and finished for sale faster. This means less lambs on the farm, less pasture contamination, more feed for ewes to get them up to mating weight and less work.

To reduce the chance of developing drench resistance, a combination drench containing a newer active should be used as part of a drenching programme in late summer/early autumn (knockout drench) and after the last Cyductin drench (as an exit drench).

Cyductin is available either plain, selenised or in combination with praziquantel for tape control. If you are after more information or to place an order for Cyductin Oral, contact ATS today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

¹ Murphy, A. Journal of Ag Research 1994

² Mckenna, P. Vetscript 2014

TOTAL WEIGHT GAIN OVER 62 DAYS

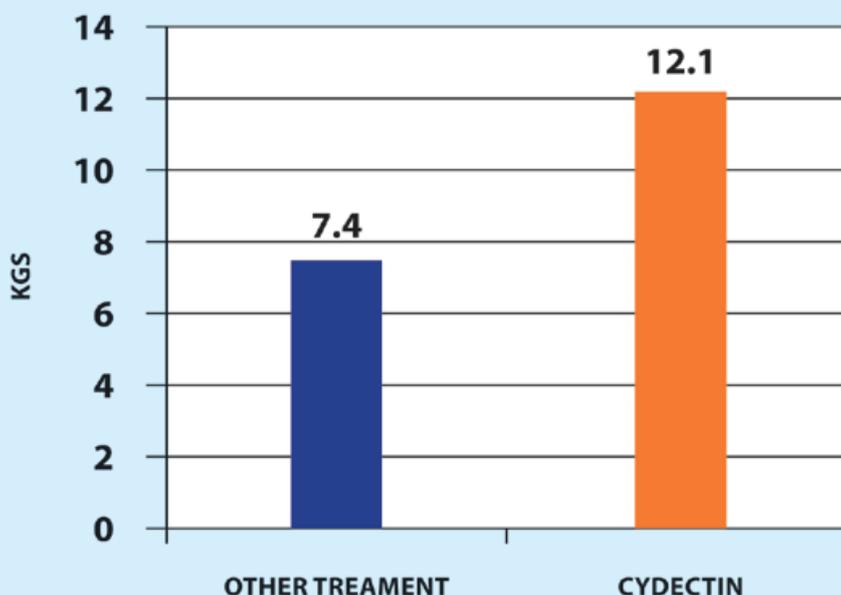


Figure 1. Graph showing the total weight gain of lambs over the 62 days of the trial.

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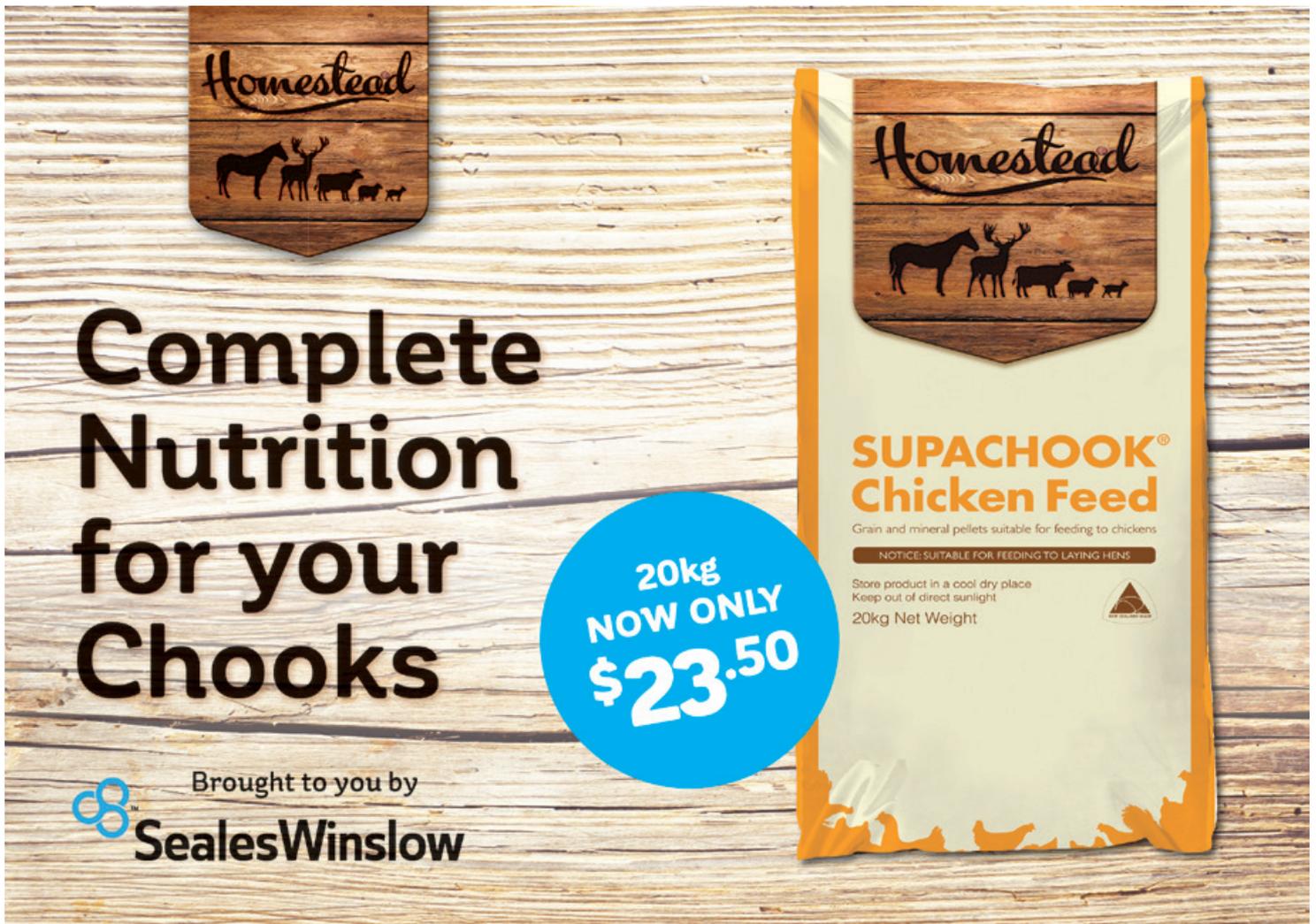
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Flystrike Prevention

WORDS SUPPLIED BY ELANCO

Economic impact

Blowfly strike is the second most costly parasitic disease of sheep in New Zealand, ranking only behind gastro-intestinal roundworms in economic importance. It is estimated that blowfly strike costs the New Zealand sheep industry approximately \$37 million per year, with these losses arising from lost meat and wool production, deaths and treatment costs. 1) Research has shown that even relatively small strikes can cause a marked appetite loss in the struck animal, resulting in weight loss. Recovering this lost weight can take significant time. 2) Anecdotal evidence suggests that ewes and ewe hoggets struck in late summer/autumn are far less likely to get in lamb than non-struck animals.

Cyrex liquid: dressing flystrike wounds with cyrex liquid

A combination of two complimentary and proven active ingredients, cyromazine 500g/L and spinosad 12.5g/L, Cyrex Liquid is a flystrike prevention and treatment product that provides ongoing protection for up to 12 weeks, safely treats struck sheep, and allows strike wounds to heal.

Both of Cyrex liquid's active ingredients have an excellent safety^{1,2} profile for mammals and the environment making Cyrex liquid a convenient and safe product for dressing struck sheep.

Convenient 250mL Cyrex liquid dressing pack makes 125L of dressing fluid

Cyrex Liquid is available in three pack sizes, including a 250mL dressing pack that when diluted makes 125 litres of dressing fluid.

Each 250mL bottle comes with its own 20mL measuring bowl that clips onto the lid. With a mixing rate of 1:500, 10mL of Cyrex liquid will make 5 litres of dressing fluid.

Use recommendations

For best results struck wool should be removed from the struck area before the dressing is applied. This removes many of the maggots and helps the wound to dry. Cyrex liquid dressing fluid should be made up fresh each day and applied liberally to the affected area to achieve saturation of the wool to skin level. Garden sprayers are unlikely to put a sufficient application onto the animal and are not recommended.

Maggots can track away from obvious strike areas and this should be investigated with removal of wool beyond the strike area or using a broader application of dressing fluid.

Safe and effective for up to 12 weeks

Ideally a flystrike dressing should kill all maggots, prevent further tissue damage, prevent re-strike and allow wounds to heal. When applied

according to label directions, Cyrex liquid achieves this with ease.

The two active ingredients in Cyrex liquid, cyromazine and spinosad, are both well-known active ingredients available under the Vetrazin™ and Extinosad™ brands. Together they provide knockdown kill of maggots combined with long term protection from further strike.

Both cyromazine and spinosad have very favorable safety profiles and this assists in wound healing, along with ensuring animal and operator safety.

Cyrex liquid is also available in 5L and 10L pack sizes for use through automatic jetting races, hand ting and constant replenishment shower dips. For more information or to order your Cyrex today, contact ATS on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

References

- 1) EXTINOSAD Jetting Fluid/Flystrike dressing for Sheep in Long Wool Technical Manual Version 1 30/11/00. Elanco animal health (for internal use only).
- 2) Hart R.J. *et al*/Technical details of a new sheep blowfly insecticide. Wool Technology and sheep breeding. University of New South Wales, December 1973

CYREX Liquid contains 12.5 g/L spinosad and 500 g/L cyromazine.

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Committed to the business of farming

Pluck's Engineering at Rakaia marked 50 years in business this year—a milestone achieved by going out of their way to know what farmers need and delivering quality farm machinery and dairy effluent equipment designed to do a better job. WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE

Research and development has always been crucial, says owner Neil Pluck, whose parents Graham and Glenis founded the business in 1966.

One of Graham's early innovations, the effluent enviro saucer, has been copied around the country and more-recently developed pond stirrers are helping dairy farmers comply with good management practices now demanded by the industry.

Neil says research and development is a passion and Pluck's innovations help farming businesses be the best they can be; their success has spinoffs for everyone, from business who support those farmers to local schools and the wider community.

Neil sees both the big picture and the local landscape. He is a member of a Government group advising the Minister of Small Business, he leads Business Mid Canterbury and runs his manufacturing workshop using Lean business philosophies. Lean was developed by Japanese car manufacturers who wanted to speed up their production lines, while making the work safer and easier.

Like his father, Neil's foresight and ability to spot an opportunity or new trend has helped keep Pluck's Engineering intact over the years. As boys, Neil and his brother Bruce would often join Graham in the workshop in the early days and while Bruce chose building, Neil went on to become a qualified fitter-welder and join the family business.

Neil says travelling overseas gave him a preview of farming techniques that could be used in New Zealand.

"You don't need to be a scientist. You can look at complicated machinery and break it down to the point it doesn't look that tricky. And you are always looking for something that can do a job better."

The effluent pond stirrers are a perfect example of adapting an existing idea for Kiwi farmers. Neil saw the stirrers in use at a pig effluent pond and learned stirring the effluent increased aerobic activity and ensured the contents remained in a form that could be pumped out as liquid fertiliser. He has adapted that for our dairy farmers, who can now manage their effluent ponds better and pump the liquid fertiliser onto pasture via their centre pivots.

The stirrers have recently been modified to deal with low level ponds that are now part of good management practices expected of farmers. The low levels bring more storage capacity and farmers can keep nutrients from leaching through soil profiles or into water ways, complying with environmental regulations that now shape their businesses.



ABOVE: Neil Pluck, owner and operator of Pluck's Engineering

MAIN IMAGE: From massive heavy rollers with innovative cushion draw-bars to single-operator square bale feed-out trailers, have been designed to do a better job for farmers.

Pluck's effluent screens have also been adapted from equipment designed to screen out grape skins in the wine-making process.

Neil says their products, from massive heavy rollers with innovative cushion draw-bars to single-operator square bale feed-out trailers, have been designed to do a better job for farmers.

"If their business is doing well, everybody is doing well."

While Pluck's business is serving the rural community, locals from Rakaia frequently pop into the workshop with little jobs, like a request to sharpen hedge clippers.

Neil says the small jobs are treated just like the big jobs. The entire workshop honours the Lean system, which at Pluck's involves a visual display using cattle ear tags to mark the progress of a job or to initiate a stock order. This way, there is always work to do and the right tools and resources on hand.

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Investment in research and people

FAR investment in research for the cropping sector is determined in consultation with farmers and industry, with the aim of including a wide range of research projects to meet the needs of growers with regards to the crops grown and the issues their businesses are facing. WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY NICK PYKE, CEO, FAR

FAR research projects range in duration. Some, such as cultivar and fungicide trials, are short term in nature, with results available for use by farmers in the following year. Other, longer term projects, such as research on endophytes and long term tillage trials, are unlikely to deliver benefits to farmers for ten to fifteen years. The nature of FAR's research has changed markedly in recent years. Initially, FAR investment was focused on productivity research, but with the environmental and market pressures on farmers, we have increased our focus on environmental issues. This focus includes work on N leaching, determining the effectiveness of models such as Overseer®, and developing new products or solutions for the future through research in areas such as endophytes, new crops and agricultural engineering.

The contribution of FAR research to the profitability of farms can be difficult to assess, as results are often cumulative, or spread across the farm system, rather than a single crop. This is the case for projects such as the one which helped ensure that Canterbury farmers could continue to use stubble burning as a management tool. However, for some projects, such as Cultivar Performance Trials, it is possible to be more specific.

“Policy decisions and government actions can have a huge impact on costs to farmers.”

By separating out the gains made as a result of genetic improvement from those resulting

from research based agronomic improvement, it is possible to evaluate the true value of investment into agronomic research. For example, in spring barley, the average yield increase in FAR trials due to improved agronomics from research, is 120kg/ha/year or approximately \$38/ha/year. If this increase were applied across the whole barley area in New Zealand then the research is returning an extra \$1.9 million per year, a return on investment of approximately 3:1. In wheat the increase is \$32/ha/year from agronomic research.

Policy decisions and government actions can have a huge impact on costs to farmers. FAR needs a clear understanding of policy and policy development, but must also maintain its role as an independent research body.



FAR has developed some clear principles of how it can work with other parties in this area. The emphasis of FAR work in this area is to ensure policy organisations, such as Federated Farmers, have sound, science based information to use in policy deliberations to reduce compliance costs for farmers. FAR has invested, with MPI SFF, HortNZ, Regional Councils and Overseer®, in nitrogen management research and evaluation of Overseer and other models for over ten years. This investment is focused on trying to make sure the systems used in regulation are useful, able to predict N losses reasonably accurately and can be implemented by cropping farmers. The Good Management Practices (GMP), that were developed across all sectors with Environment Canterbury (ECan), are a good example of this, and we hope that in future, regional council requirements will reflect the need for good information at a reasonable cost from farmers.

Modern agriculture systems result in the collection of large amounts of data. FAR research and extension aims to use data collected in precision agriculture, ProductionWise® and the Arable Industry Marketing Initiative (AIMI) to help farmers make decisions that will improve profitability. Although AIMI cannot directly influence price, last year, farmers responded to the signals from the AIMI survey, and other market information, and markedly reduced the area sown in some commodity crops. ProductionWise® is now in use by more than 600 farmers who appreciate its ability to quickly and easily deliver quality information to meet farm environmental and traceability reporting requirements. FAR has worked with regional councils, irrigation schemes

and other groups to ensure that data from ProductionWise® can be used in Farm Environment Plans and for a range of farm audits. As more data becomes available, interpreting it in order to add value to farm businesses will become more important, and data from ProductionWise® and other paddock recording systems will be valuable to farmers in benchmarking their performance against others.

“By separating out the gains made as a result of genetic improvement from those resulting from research based agronomic improvement, it is possible to evaluate the true value of investment into agronomic research.”

The right people will be critical for cropping farmers, now, and in the future. Cropping farmers rely on the company representatives visiting their properties to be up to date with the latest research information and FAR works with a number of fertiliser, seed and chemical companies to ensure their field representatives are involved in research and extension, or are otherwise well informed of the latest research findings. A number of FAR research programmes are carried out in collaboration with companies.

It is also important to develop younger people to have the skills needed to add value to the cropping industry. FAR staff have been lecturing at Lincoln University for a number of years and FAR also funds scholarships open for post graduate students at Lincoln and

Massey Universities. FAR has also sponsored final year projects at Canterbury University's Engineering Department. In the first year the students developed a water inflated bag, commercialised as HydroFix, to secure irrigators in high wind events. Last year the students worked on renewable energy for grain drying and a robotic bird-scarer, and the robotic bird-scarer project was extended into 2016.

The FAR Graduate Programme has two new graduates entering it over the next few months. These graduates spend a year with FAR, completing a research project and working within FAR and the industry in New Zealand and Australia. Last year's graduates are now working within the cropping industry in New Zealand.

Arable Ys, our under-35 year old programme, continues to be successful and is very well supported by farmers and industry. The support from companies within the cropping industry in sponsoring events, hosting meetings and providing speakers has been very important to the success of the programme. Last year an overseas trip saw Arable Ys visit the USA where they were able to view the grass seed industry in Oregon, machinery manufacture and cropping in the Mid West, and even peanuts and cotton in the South. This year the trip was closer to home. The group travelled to Southland stopping at farms and businesses along the way. The presentations included oats, from growing and processing, through to where genetic and high technology research is heading. Arable Ys is very important for developing younger people in the industry and a number are now participating in other FAR or industry roles or activities.

To progress the cropping industry needs great people and excellent research. FAR are working with industry to try to achieve this.

ABOVE: FAR Wheat Trial 2015–16
BELOW: Nick Pyke, FAR CEO
OPPOSITE: FAR 2016 Graduates Tim Brooker & Sophie Blair





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WORDS SUPPLIED BY SEALESWINSLOW



In fact, regular weight gain results in animals that are superior performers in every regard. This worthwhile goal can be easily achieved provided a few key points are observed.

It may be cliché but there's no denying that young stock represent an important investment. As is often noted, today's heifers are tomorrow's dairy herd. What's more, their future performance is largely influenced by how well they fare earlier on. So how do you maximise the return from your future income providers?

According to ruminant nutrition expert, Wendy Morgan (SealesWinslow's Nutrition and Quality Manager), the answer lies in observing industry live weight targets. "They're an important indicator

and the best tool for charting your calves' progress," Wendy says. She cites guidelines that suggest heifers should reach 30% of mature live weight at six months, 60% around 15 months (mating), and 90% at 22 months (pre-calving).

An LIC study has shown that while New Zealand heifers meet industry targets during the first six months, they tend to fall behind shortly thereafter. And this is particularly relevant, as it is the weight of the animal - rather than its age—that determines its maturity. "Body weight drives puberty and ultimately determines mating success," says Wendy, who emphasises that there's every reason for ensuring that young stock gain weight at an appropriate rate. After all,

their reproductive performance and future milk production hinge on it.

Needless to say, guesswork will only get you so far; regular weigh-ins are invaluable for determining how well your animals measure up to targets.

Wendy also points out that stress-related factors are a weighty issue. "When animals are transported or when they establish a new hierarchy within a new herd, they become stressed and produce cortisol," she explains. "The upshot is that they draw on energy that would otherwise be utilised for growth."

The good news is that stress-related weight loss can be managed with nutrition, for instance with an appropriate transition feed such as SealesWinslow's Weightgainer pellets, which are easy to use and cost-effective. This is also a great choice for supplementing pasture in case of drought-related feed shortages.

Of course, pellets may not be the most convenient option, especially if your animals are away from the home block. However, their mineral requirements still need to be considered even if sufficient dry matter is available to them. Poor-quality pastures don't contain the mineral profile that promote growth and development of young stock. SealesWinslow's Cattle Young Stock Block is formulated to meet the precise needs of young stock, delivering a unique blend of essential oils along with cobalt, iodine, selenium and zinc—a powerful formula that specifically targets growth during the all-important post-weaning period.

The product has received a great deal of positive feedback from farmers up and down the country. Many have commented that the product convenience is an added bonus—especially the 25kg tubs (one per 25 cattle), which make for easy handling.

Importantly, the molasses-based formulation is very palatable, ensuring that animals lick the block often enough to ingest the right amount of nutrients. Typical consumption per day ranges around 30–100 grams per calf, which makes it a cost-effective nutritional investment.

As one farmer remarked, "If you compare the cost of a good block with the cost of animals that suffer from poor fertility or insufficient growth, you'll soon realise that the block is value for money."

If you'd like to know more about promoting young stock growth, please contact your SealesWinslow representative or ATS today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

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Pools are for pleasure

A swimming pool in your backyard is a magnet for family and friends over summer. WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE

The young ones can cool off with their mates on a hot day after school and then the oldies can recharge with a dip and pool-side beverage.

With the weather forecasters predicting above average temperatures this summer, Ashburton Pool and Pump World are primed for a busy season helping clients manage their pools and spas.

Owners Paul and Jackie Cooper offer a one-stop shop for all swimming and spa pool needs, from new installations, service, upgrades and repairs, to rural and domestic water systems, pumps, free water testing, chemicals and accessories.

Paul has 16 years' experience in the pool industry and the couple have owned the business for the past 10 years. Relocating from East Street to Gordons Road two years ago has allowed them to grow their pool maintenance programme and it is now easier for clients to make the most of their pools.

Jackie said clients could choose how involved they wanted to be in the maintenance of their pool. Some came in once a month with a water sample and bought chemical, some signed up for a full valet service which involves Paul and Jackie going out to test water pH fortnightly, treating it with chemicals and even cleaning it.

Clients opted for different service levels depending on their confidence in managing alkaline levels and filtration maintenance or having the time to do so.

A new water testing machine installed over the winter at Gordons Road means clients can bring a sample of their pool and spa water and have it

tested on the spot. Jackie, or daughter Michelle Hope, are on hand to recommend treatment if necessary.

The water composition is affected by temperature, how many people are using it and even location; owners, however, just want their pool or spa to be healthy, clean and algae free.

A product gaining a big following is BioGuard. Jackie said it was manufactured by a company committed solely to pool and spa chemistry and was easy to use, kinder to those with sensitive skins and could be safely stored alongside household cleaning products.

While the warmer months are busy with pool maintenance, the rest of the year Paul and the fourth member of their team Clark Stanger are involved in pool upgrades and new installations.

Older concrete pools can be given a new lease of life with the installation of a special liner, while new pools can be created from scratch, including fencing and landscaping. The Ashburton District Council will begin enforcing new swimming pool legislation in January and outdoor pools that are non-compliant could be issued a notice to fix.

If you're not sure whether your pool complies, talk to Paul and Jackie.



ABOVE: They offer a one-stop shop for all swimming and spa pool needs

MAIN IMAGE: Paul Cooper, Clark Stanger, Michelle Hope & Jackie Cooper

Jackie said their job was to make sure pool and spa owners derived the most enjoyment possible from their investments. Another tool toward that objective is their new range of robotic cleaners. These run from mains power and crawl across the floor and walls of your pool in a four-hour cycle, working just like a vacuum cleaner.

Jackie said all the products and chemicals were tested in their own family pool and only the user-friendly and quality equipment made it to their retail space. They also keep up to date with technology changes through industry-run education courses.



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Southern road trip a buzz for ATS/Meridian customers

Getting the best possible deals for its shareholders to maximise their farm profits has meant ATS has built resources and partnerships across all aspects of the farm business. Seed, Farm Supplies, Fuel and Energy all focus on delivering the ATS promise to minimise costs for its farmer shareholders. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

But it is not only all about costs. ATS staff work hard to build close, enjoyable relationships with their farmer members, getting to know them, their families and their businesses well. That relationship building also extends to suppliers and business partners sharing the same goals for their farmer customers.

One of these valued ATS partners is energy partner and generator Meridian Energy, a partner in the supply of electricity to many ATS members. Recognising the strength of that relationship, and appreciating the loyalty of their valued customers, ATS and Meridian hosted a group of long time loyal farmer members on a trip south this spring. The southern road trip comprising 10 couples headed out of Ashburton and through the magnificent Mackenzie Country and on through to Cromwell for an overnight stay.

Along the way they got to stop in at Twizel to visit Meridian's new office facility. Nestled appropriately in the heart of hydro power country, the stop over gave them an insight to the finely tuned network of generators, canals and equipment that quietly hums with energy across the vast landscape of the Mackenzie Country.

Heading further south the group spent the night at Cromwell's picturesque Pisa Moorings lodge near town.

Of course no visit was complete in Otago without sampling some of the region's fine wine and food, something the guests got to do at the Carrick winery near Bannockburn.

The highlight of the trip came the following day with a visit to the Highlands Motorsport Park. A playground for everything on four wheels that goes fast, the park gives anyone with a hankering for speed the opportunity to test their limits in safety as they discover their inner Formula one spirit.

Out on the track strapped into the driver's seat of a powerful Subaru WRX gave the group plenty of opportunity to test their boy racer instincts on the clock—Matt Paton took top spot on the rankings and earned a Highland's jacket for his efforts.

If that dose of speed was not enough the group got to put their faith in the Subaru's ABS brakes, testing them at speed, followed up with some speed circuit laps. Then it was off the tar-seal and onto the dirt in Highlands' dirt buggy area with some white knuckled dust covered fun followed up with a round on the Highland go-kart course. Mild mannered farmers by trade, a few competitive spirits soon showed through as

guests got the opportunity to push their skills to the limit, safe on a well-marked course with no traffic coming the other way.

The breath-taking experience at Highland was rounded off with a more sedate, but equally competitive, clay bird shooting session before enjoying a high country lunch and then heading north again.

ATS Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon says the two day trip proved a non-stop action trip that quickly discovered some hidden driving talent among the group.

"There were a few members who were initially not as confident who became very confident by the end of the day, putting their foot down hard and getting some good times. The group loved the day, it was something many would not have done, and they really enjoyed it."

Farmers Carl and Megan Henderson say the two day stint off the farm pushed them well out of their comfort zone, with plenty of opportunity to test their skills while also enjoying the company of other farmers, ATS and Meridian staff.

Meridian Agribusiness Key Account Manager Glenn McWhinnie said the two days proved a memorable time for all the participants; jam packed with an exciting range of activities that proved immensely popular with the farmers who were fortunate to go.

"The feedback we have had from the clients that joined us was that it was also a chance to step out of their comfort zone and try something they would not otherwise have done. For us it was a great opportunity to say thanks to some loyal clients."

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Karl & Megan Henderson, Rob Sharkie, Tania Miller, Raylene Clement, Peter Holmes, Raelene & Gary Wilson, Martin & Linsey Furrer, Tracey Gordon, Emma & Hamish Irwin, John Bianchet, Glenn McWhinnie, David & Jayne Clark, Richard & Chrissie Wright, Richard & Melissa Wilson, Martin & Sarah Early, Julia & Matt Paton; The Race Team; Megan & Karl Henderson, and Rob Sharkie suiting up; The race is on

BELOW: Testing their aim



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Minted melon, tomato & prosciutto salad

INGREDIENTS

- 500g mixed coloured tomatoes, chopped into large chunks
- 1 rock melon, segmented and cut into chunks roughly the same size as the tomatoes
- 12 slices prosciutto, can replace prosciutto with feta for a vegetarian option
- Handful mint leaves, shredded
- Crusty bread, to serve



FOR THE DRESSING

- 1 ½ tbsp Sherry or red wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp honey

METHOD

1. To make the dressing, whisk all the ingredients together in a bowl and set aside.
2. Toss the tomatoes and melon together in a bowl with a little dressing, some sea salt and black pepper. Loosely lay the prosciutto over a platter and pile the tomatoes and melon on top. Drizzle with extra dressing, scatter with mint and serve straight away with crusty bread.

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Girls' Night a big hit in small town



The inaugural ATS/Ruralco Girls' Night Out in Methven has been hailed a great success by organisers with similar events likely to follow.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

Hosted at the ATS Methven Store, local suppliers showcased their wares while the 90 women in attendance were treated to nibbles thanks to the Somerset Grocer, and were entertained by Christchurch based, New Zealand celebrity food guru, Jax Hamilton.

“It was a great opportunity to reiterate our commitment to our farming communities—big and small.”

Well known for her stint on New Zealand's second series of Master Chef 2011 and more latterly for her cooking demonstrations and as a popular MC and host, and for her role on Countdown supermarket's Feed Four for \$15, Jax shared an interesting and entertaining insight into her life and her recipe for success.

An experienced presenter and in regular demand at a variety of functions and events, Jax says it was great to be doing something closer to home as many events take her away from her South Island base. When she's not on the road, Jax loves developing new recipes and has most recently been working on a new project due for release early next year.

Organisers of the Girls' Night Out say the idea behind the event was to give something back to rural townships. “ATS/Ruralco already run highly successful annual events such as our Instore Days and our Christmas shopping day in early December, although these are primarily Ashburton focussed. A Girls' Night Out was a chance for one of the district's rural communities to play host to an exclusive event showcasing local businesses and products as well as our own Gift and Homeware business,” says Group CEO Rob Sharkie.

“It was a great opportunity to reiterate our commitment to our farming communities—big and small. Demand for tickets was high, and feedback from those who attended indicated strong support for similar events in the future, both in Methven and possibly other small towns,” says Rob.

“Jax shared an interesting and entertaining insight into her life and her recipe for success.”

“At this stage, it's quite likely we will look at hosting another similar event,” he says.

“A lot of the success was due to the commitment shown by our main sponsor



ABOVE: Jax Hamilton, New Zealand celebrity food guru
TOP: Allison Hydes, Cath Schikker, Christina Humm & Rebecca Humm

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Two great feed options

Sovereign kale and Spitfire forage rape continue to be excellent feed options that are suited to a number of different stock classes.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM



Kale is traditionally sown between late November and early December. The only reason to sow earlier is if it is being sown in very dry conditions or lambs are being used to graze the crop in February/March. Early sowing of kale may result in higher drymatter percentages and therefore higher yields by late autumn, however this is associated with older plants with more lignin and lower quality stems. This can make utilisation harder and often leads to more stem left in the paddock for future management.

Sovereign kale from Agricom is a very popular kale that combines excellent quality with a good yield potential. January or early February sown Sovereign is a genuine alternative to sown rape at this time. The benefit is that Sovereign will hold leaf for longer and the stem will maintain its quality for longer.

Sovereign kale is one of the latest flowering kales on the market. This means that in late grazing environments such as the Canterbury high country, or where there is a chance of excessive winter crop, Sovereign will last through to the start of October before the onset of flowering. A standout characteristic

of Sovereign when compared to other kales, particularly giant types, is that it produces a thinner stem and a lower proportion of total drymatter in the lower stem. The thinner stem and leafy nature of Sovereign provides a high leaf-to-stem ratio.

The lower stem of any kale is poor quality, but with Sovereign, the bottom section of the stem makes up a lower proportion of the total plant drymatter. Although you can potentially grow more feed with larger stemmed kale, to maintain a suitable quality of feed consumed, you would need to leave more kale behind or increase supplements to account for the reduced quality.

For autumn or winter grazing Spitfire forage rape, with a plant maturity of 90–100 days, is another great option. Spitfire is a multi-purpose rape with excellent yield, insect tolerance, and a low drymatter percentage stem. It is a great option for young cattle and lamb and sheep grazing. A late January sowing date will allow for one grazing and could yield 6–9 tonne DM/ha.

Spitfire also allows options for companion species such as herbs and legumes to be planted with it



ABOVE: Sovereign kale
MAIN IMAGE: Spitfire rape

to provide variety in the animals' diets, to increase total production and possibly provide feed options for early spring.

For more information about on Sovereign kale or Spitfire forage rape, contact your local Agricom rep or ATS Seed today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

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How to be digitally savvy and secure

The security of computers has been likened to a home with windows that never fully shut or doors that don't properly lock. Would you feel safe living there?

WORDS SUPPLIED BY TECHBOX

Techbox have put together the following suggestions to help you to ensure that you maintain the best security possible.

1 Use Strong Passwords

Using one password for all of your online needs can end in disaster. Although it makes it easier for you to remember your login details, one single breach by a hacker could pry your entire digital life open.

- Try to use unique passwords for different sites, and try not to auto save passwords or login details.
- When creating new passwords, use a combination of numbers and letters (including upper case and lower case letters) to ensure you have a strong password which is less likely to be cracked.

Avoid Data Disasters

Any time you take your work on the go, you are opening yourself up to a number of security risks. Using an unsecure Wi-Fi network can risk loss of data confidentiality and can expose your system to a number of threats. To avoid this, invest in a personal hotspot that you can password protect no matter where you are and be confident that your connection is secure. Check in with your wireless provider and see if you can add this to your existing plan.

2

3 Consider Security Based Software

There is a wide range of easy-to-use and affordable security software available for purchase and installation. Commonly used software includes Norton Anti-Virus and McAfee. Once installed, be sure to keep it up to date. Talk to your IT provider about what would be best suited to your needs.

3

4 Consider a Products and Service Approach to Security

Many people find that the best way to ensure the safety and security of their IT infrastructure is to outsource their security operations (partially or fully) to third party vendors for extra protection.

5 Make Systems Upkeep Your Number One Priority

It is widely known that upkeep is cheaper than replacement, yet many people don't follow this simple principle. It is important that you continuously update your systems through software updates. In doing so, you can significantly lessen many basic cyber threats.

5

6 Back Up Your Systems

One of the most common current hacks is ransomware—when hackers use a virus to encrypt your computer files and hold them hostage until you pay a ransom amount. In some cases people pay the ransom but important files remain locked and lost forever. Many of these threats come via email—so take care not to open anything that looks like it could be coming from a suspicious source. To prevent the hurt from getting such a bug, be sure to back up your files to hard drives and secure them in a safe place. The cloud is also useful for instant back up and security.

6

7 Beware of Social Engineering

If someone calls or emails you asking for sensitive information, it is okay to say no. There have been a number of incidences in New Zealand where people have posed to be staff from companies such as the Inland Revenue Department in order to try and gain confidential information. You can always call the company directly to verify credentials before giving out any information.

8 Don't Forget the Physical

All of the above points become redundant if your computer is not physically secure. A thief can easily get all the data on your computer if they can physically get into it. Even login passwords can be bypassed if they have physical access. Be sure to put a password on your computer itself, and take care with portable devices (laptops, tablets etc.) when in public.

8



How to keep your family safe online

With the increased use of the internet and devices it's more important than ever that we all play a part in keeping our families and communities safe.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY FARMSIDE

Helpful tips:

- Check all messages, emails, texts, call logs, apps and browser history. A parent access rule can apply, this means you could have access/passwords to everything on your children's device.
- Have frequent conversations with your children about internet safety and bullying.

- Install parental controls on devices. These can be used to block certain sites or monitor what your children are typing and viewing online.

There are lots of options, some are free of charge, and others have annual membership costs.

Net Nanny:

www.netnanny.com

Block apps such as Snapchat, block pornography, create web filters, allows you to select times when you would like access to the internet paused, monitor social media, gain usage reports and receive real time alerts for issues.

Norton Online Family:

<https://family.norton.com/web/>

Block harmful and inappropriate websites, view usage through reports, set time limits and

schedules, monitor social media, view messages and receive real time alerts.

Qustodio:

www.qustodio.com/en/

Set rules and schedules, block pornography and other inappropriate websites, control games and apps, location tracking.

Kidlogger:

<http://kidlogger.net/>

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Christmas fun for Ruralco Kids



Strawberry Santa Hats



YOU WILL NEED:

(Makes 14)

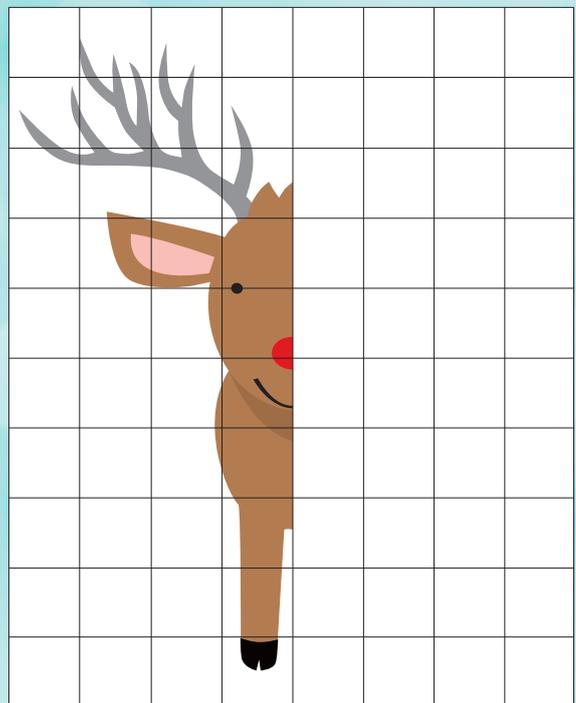
- 1 packet of oreo biscuits
- 1 punnet of strawberries
- 1 cup of white chocolate
- A piping bag

DIRECTIONS:

1. Place all the oreo's flat on a plate or board.
2. Chop the leafy top off all strawberries, so that each have a flat bottom.
3. Heat the chocolate in a microwave safe bowl in the microwave for 1 minute or until completely melted.
4. Pour the melted chocolate into the piping bag.
5. Using the piping bag, smear a dollop of melted chocolate onto the top of the oreo and then place the flat side of the strawberry on top of the chocolate. Repeat this for all strawberries.
6. Place a small dollop of white chocolate on the top of the strawberry (this is the pompom of the Santa hat). Repeat this for all strawberries.

Reindeer Symmetry

Complete John the Deer...



Pine Cone Christmas Trees

YOU WILL NEED:

(Makes 1)

- 1 pinecone
- Green paint
- Paint brush
- Sequins, ribbon etc to decorate the pine cone
- Hot glue gun and glue sticks
- 1 tiny terra cotta pot

DIRECTIONS:

1. Paint pinecone green using your paint brush, then wait for the paint to dry.
2. Tie little bows using ribbon.
3. With the point of the cone facing up wrap the ribbon or string of sequins around the pine cone and glue down using the hot glue gun.
4. Glue sequins, pom poms and bows on the pinecone using the hot glue gun to decorate it how you like so it transforms into a Christmas Tree.
5. Balance the wide end of the pinecone on the tiny pot and glue down.





Colour in the picture of the Ruralco family at Christmas

Once completed, get it to Ruralco by **21 December** and you'll be in to win your very own Rufus the Dog soft toy

NAME

AGE

MEMBER NO.

--	--	--

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- There are two age groups and prize packs allocated per age group: age 4–7 and age 8–11.
- Please ensure the family Ruralco account number, age and name of the entrant is submitted with the entry.
- All entries must be received by ATS or Ruralco no later than 4.30pm, 21 December 2016. Either drop it in to any of the ATS stores or post to PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740.
- Winners will be announced on 16 January 2017.
- One entry per child only.
- Ruralco reserves the right to publish all entries and details of the winners. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Once the judging has taken place, winners will be notified by telephone.
- The prize is not transferable or exchangeable and Ruralco reserves the right to change the prize to the same or equal value at any time if the prize becomes unavailable. No responsibility accepted for late, lost or misdirected entries.

Additional copies can be downloaded from www.ruralco.co.nz/kids

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Are you with the best energy provider for your farm?

When is the last time you took a close look at your electricity accounts? Now is a good time to review your plans and to check you are on the best pricing solution for your farm. ATS Energy is here to make managing your energy accounts easy by continuing to work with our partners—Meridian, Genesis Energy, Nova Energy and Kea Energy, to ensure you get the best offers available to suit your individual needs.

Contact ATS Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon today to get an energy price comparison on your accounts.

Time to get your kale in the ground

December is still kale sowing time. Talk to ATS Seed about which kale variety is best suited to your farming system. We stock a full range of kale varieties and treatments at great Ruralco Card pricing, plus our Arable and Pastoral Representatives offer free on farm professional advice on how to grow a yielding economic crop. So call the ATS Seed team today to find a kale variety that will work for you.

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- Mobil Riccarton, Christchurch - opening soon
- Mobil Sydenham, Christchurch - re-opening soon
- Mobil Twizel
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Upcoming events

Join us at these events and keep an eye out for the great fuel offers on offer

- Banks Peninsula A&P Show at Little River, 21 January
- Mayfield A&P Show, 11 March
- Methven A&P Show, 18 March
- South Island Agricultural Field Days in Kirwee, 29–31 March

Reset your Ruralco Card PIN Number

If you have forgotten your PIN or want to change your PIN on your Ruralco Card, simply contact us, we can wipe your current PIN. Once your PIN has been wiped & reset, you can spend on the Ruralco Card as usual, the EFTPOS terminal will ask "Sign or PIN", choose PIN and enter a 4 digit number of your choice. The EFTPOS terminal will remember the number you choose and it will remain your PIN to be used at all Ruralco Suppliers in the future.



Are you, a family member or friend getting married?

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Plus to help you celebrate your big day, ATS will gift you a voucher to the value of 10% of your registry spend! Simply contact us to arrange your appointment with one of the ATS Gift & Homeware team on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

Have you got an incorrect charge on your account?

A reminder that if you are short paying your account due to an incorrect charge or a disputed invoice, we need to be advised as soon as possible so a deduction in payment to suppliers can be made. Please advise us by the 15th of each month should this be the case.

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