

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

APRIL / MAY 2018

Sustainable farming driving healthier products, healthier environment

Mycoplasma Bovis a disease worth eradicating

Goat success no longer a fairy story

Wheatgrowers tapped to enter competition

Power market set for volatile prospects



From the Group CEO



Ruralco's success in New Zealand's highly competitive rural supplies market is driven by our entire team's determination to deliver the best products, service and knowledge at the right price for your farming operation.

Our people are your people. They are here to ensure your co-operative's ongoing success, both now and into the future.

Recently our Board of Directors made the decision to appoint a new independent director. It was further proof of Ruralco's commitment to invest in high quality people at all levels of our business and provided another opportunity to ensure the Board remains professional, relevant and future focused.

In this issue of Real Farmer we are pleased to introduce that new Director—Brent Wheeler. An economist, experienced director and business consultant, Brent is relishing his new role and shares his thoughts on his latest appointment and the challenges he believes lay ahead.

Also featured in this issue is an article on the steps being taken to tackle and eradicate Mycoplasma Bovis. There's been plenty of talk and hype in the media and over the farm gate around the spread

of this disease and what steps can be taken to prevent any further outbreaks. In response, the dairy industry and Ministry for Primary Industries have developed a bulk milk test programme in an effort to control and contain the disease and agricultural reporter, Richard Rennie takes a look at how the programme is being rolled out and at some of the initial findings.

In every Real Farmer issue we are fortunate to feature the stories of our farmers and this time two very different South Island farming families have generously given us an insight into their operations.

Southland farmers, David and Robyn Shaw take us on their 30 year, goat fibre journey which began in the mohair heydays of the late 1980s. Today the Clinton farming operation has evolved into a cashmere business with an eye on the global market.

And South Canterbury organic dairy farmers, Bryan and Jacqueline Clearwater share their paddock to plate story of their Clearwater Yoghurt products, and the development of their dairy operation and business ventures which started from small beginnings on their Peel Forest farm.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Real Farmer. Happy reading.

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RealFarmer

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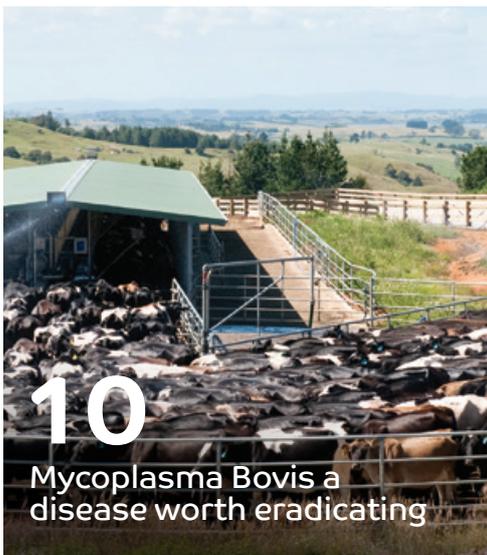


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Bryan & Jackie Clearwater's gate-to-plate organic dairy company has built a reputation for manufacturing delicious yoghurt

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Sustainable farming
driving healthier
products, healthier
environment

Empowered to make a difference in their own part of the world, sustainable principles are the key drivers behind Clearwater's Organic Dairy, a small-scale organic dairy farm delivering delicious, healthier products, and a healthier environment.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

In the shadows of Mt Peel, in the heart of South Canterbury, Bryan and Jackie Clearwater's gate-to-plate organic dairy company has built a reputation for manufacturing delicious yoghurt, produced using sustainable agricultural practises, that can now be found in all good food stores nationwide.

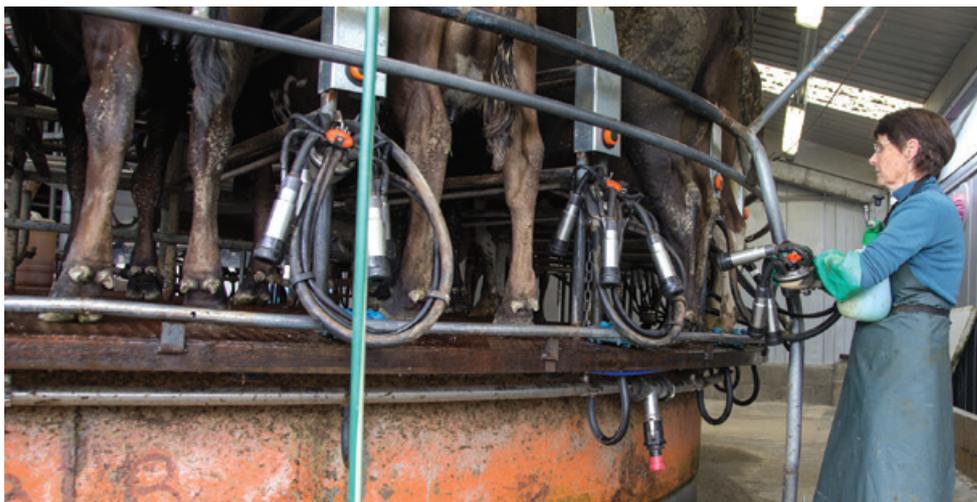
Being organic is something they're proud of, and something they're intensely passionate about.

Jackie's enthusiasm for dairying developed prior to her first husband's death while working together in the North Island. Years later when she met Bryan, he had little dairy experience, but came from good farming stock. They both were trained in horticulture. "We both had some money, wanted to be self-employed and work outdoors, but at that stage there was no money in horticulture, so I suggested we try dairying," explains Jackie.

After moving up the dairying ladder, they managed to purchase Peel View Farm in 1999. Then a sheep and beef farm, they started the conversion process straight away. Right from the start, their combined love of tramping, being in the great outdoors and the environment was the impetus for choosing to farm organically.

"Long term we believe that there is really no other way to farm. People like us just seem odd at the moment, but in time, the rest of the industry will be pushed into farming the same way. The writing is on the wall. We are just a few steps ahead, some are coming to the party, but some are going to be dragged."

The Clearwater's have long believed there shouldn't be any type of "environmental subsidy".



Under an organic system, the Clearwater's say it's possible for farmers to produce their product in an environmentally friendly way, but admittedly it's a philosophical choice, not a business decision. Going organic not only requires a huge change in mindset, but it comes at a cost and it takes time to get certified organic. It isn't an overnight decision, even with the premiums offered by the likes of Fonterra.

Jackie says to farm organically, requires changing the way you think about everything from feeding and pasture management, to breeding and animal health. With such strict standards to adhere to in order to supply Fonterra so it can meet its international export market requirements into the EU and United States, being an organic milk supplier comes with its own unique set of challenges.

The Clearwater's are champions of the organic system. Since 2000, they have been members of

the Organic Dairy and Pastoral Group (www.odgp.co.nz), a nationwide group that supports farmers who are or have a desire to become certified organic, helping to "spread the word" frequently opening their farm up for field days. They were also founding members of the Orari River Protection Group and have been members of Forest and Bird for more than 30 years.

Today, they farm 103ha (effective area) on Peel View Farm. It is irrigated with two hard-hose guns and has an average rainfall of 750mm. They lease a further 40ha dryland block 3km down the road and have also purchased a small irrigated block (43ha effective area) near Clandeboye. They work on an average of two cows per hectare and at their peak they milk 180 predominantly A2 Jersey-Friesian cross cows, with 80 cows milked through winter. This June they are planning to winter milk from the Clandeboye farm for the first time.

Over the years they have focused on enriching their pastures, moving away from traditional rye grasses which tend to be more susceptible to grass grub. Ninety per cent of their pastures are made up of a broader "salad" mix of timothy, fescue, red and white clover, chicory, narrow leaf plantain, which they've found not only tends to be more drought and grass grub resistant, but better for the cow's metabolism. Liquid seaweed and manure have also replaced traditional fertilisers.

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With low stocking rates, short distances to walk and a keen eye, Jackie says they are able to keep animal health issues to a minimum. "If we see anything, we treat it quickly using all natural products. If a cow does become lame they are treated immediately and rested. Antibiotics can't be used; if we have to treat one with antibiotics it basically has to be culled or out of the herd for 12 months."

Having farmed organically for almost 20 years on Peel View Farm, she says the benefits of the "soil-food web science" are becoming increasingly noticeable through animal health, farm yields and milk quality. Soil food web science is about comprehensive nutrition to soil fungi and bacteria, creating better water holding capacity, carbon sequestration and enhanced soil health.

While the Clearwater's aim to be totally self-sufficient, making their own silage and wintering on farm, at times they have been caught out due to extreme weather events. Buying in feed is their single biggest cost. In past years they have used organic linseed flakes at a whopping \$800/tonne, but with few organic growers around just sourcing organically certified feed can be difficult, not to mention prohibitively expensive. "It can be a struggle because we can't bring in any non-organic feed so we have to purchase human-grade, not feed grade and premium prices."

As for the cows, the Clearwater's have a closed predominantly A2 Jersey-Friesian cross cow herd, with calves born in both spring and autumn. In 2017 they kept 60 replacements. They mate using AI for four weeks, and then put beef bulls out for three weeks in a bid to reduce the number of bobby calves. This season they have trialled using Black Welsh bulls for the first time. "We are really trying to make every calf valuable," says Jackie.

On average, three-quarters of their calves are born over a three-week period. "We try to keep life as simple as we can. Nature throws enough at you without making it difficult for yourself. We do it

by reducing the pressure on the cows and don't interfere with them. We just leave it up to nature," she says.

They have stuck with the Jersey-Friesian cross to give them the volume of milk with higher fat content which is suited to making yoghurt, and milk twice a day even in winter to reduce the risk of mastitis. Jackie says they wouldn't choose to milk in winter by choice because it's tough on their staff and the animals, but they need the milk. They've been winter milking since 2005 having purchased a quota in the early 2000s.

Of the milk they produce the bulk of it is sold to Fonterra, but an increasing amount is finding its way into the vat, destined to be made into delicious, silky smooth, totally natural yoghurt. Fonterra requires a minimum pick-up of 300L every second day.

Roll back the clock 15 years and the Clearwater's always knew going organic wasn't enough, they had to think of another way to add value to their milk. They weren't cheesemakers so

making cheese wasn't an option, but yoghurt was relatively easy to make and because of its lower PH, seemingly safe. So, in 2004 with the help of local Ad Sintenie, a man with not only decades of experience in the food industry but a long family tradition in artisan dairy production, they launched Clearwater's Organic Dairy.

Initially it was a joint venture with Ad running the yoghurt business, while the Clearwater's ran the dairy farm, but they later bought him out. Business started slowly. They wanted a product that was not only wholesome, healthy and different to everything else in the market, but one that reflected their love of the land, nature and animals.

After much deliberation they settled on a "set in the pot" cream top yoghurt, to minimise the manufacturing steps and maximise the product integrity. "We believed that good and wholesome products can only be produced from the best possible raw materials. Producing products from our own organic milk, on the farm gives us that assurance."

It's a simple, unadulterated way of making the product. Milk comes straight from the cow into the vat, is pasteurised [heated] and then cooled down. No separating, homogenising, or additions—just plain organic milk. Culture is then added; the yoghurt is placed in pots, transferred to a hot room for the milk to metamorphose in yoghurt before being moved to the chiller. Essentially, what we make today can be sold tomorrow, says Jackie.

It took three years of developing, trialing, branding and modifying the product, sorting legalities and building a tiny factory adjacent the milking shed before first targeting local stores in Geraldine, Timaru and Ashburton. Clearwater's Organic Dairy natural yoghurt was an instant hit. As word

ABOVE: The Clearwater's remain the only yoghurt business in New Zealand using a "set in the pot" cream top yoghurt

BELOW LEFT: The Clearwater's Peel View Farm is the South Island's only certified organic dairy farm

BELOW RIGHT: Yoghurt is made-to-order daily and can be packed and hitting the shelves within 24 hours





travelled, business boomed. Expansion followed. It is now made-to-order daily and sold nationwide. Initially they started with just Clearwater's Cream Top Natural Yoghurt, over time adding Cream Top Honey Yoghurt sweetened with a touch of local organic clover honey, followed by Cream Top Apple & Cinnamon Yoghurt each sold in 300 gram and 700 gram potatural and Honey are also available in 2kg buckets.

Keen to add a "topless" fat free version of their yoghurt to their repertoire to satisfy the health fanatics left them with the problem of what to do with the cream. Around the same time Lewis Road Creamery was getting into butter, so that ruled that out, but the factory manager at the time worked out how to make clotted cream, which was a stroke of genius. With that, Clearwater's Organic Dairy launched Clotted Cream. Initially it was made out of their own cream, but it proved so popular that now they have to buy in cream [non-organic] to keep up with the growing demand, making it their only non-organic product.

Their latest product has been Delicious Creamed Rice Pudding, which to Jackie's surprise has also been very popular despite designed to be served cold. But not every product they've released has been welcomed with open arms onto the market. Based on the success of yoghurt drinks in the US they branched out trying them here, but they never really took off. "We learnt pretty quickly that New Zealand doesn't follow the US when it comes to trends."

Product development has been very gradual, says Jackie. "We are very limited to what we can do because we have a limited supply of milk and because we don't want additives or preservatives we can't just go and use any flavours. Making a truly organic product has its limitations, just like farming organically. But we are always working on something."

The Clearwater's now employ three people full-time and one part-time in the yoghurt business, as well as an office manager and two farm staff, but they still remain very hands-on in all facets of the business. There aren't many days where Jackie can't be found either in the milking shed or making yoghurt. It's busy, and if one person is

away she is always ready to step in at a moment's notice, however, she says it's very much a team effort and they're surrounded by some wonderful people. Given its success they are very quick to credit Ad Sintenie for getting it off the ground. "Without him it probably never would have got this far," says Jackie.

In time, the Clearwater's hope their children, Sam (28), who is an engineer, and Rose (23), who currently works in a supermarket in Wellington, might return home and take over both the farming and yoghurt operations. "There is still huge scope with the yoghurt business, but it's probably a little early to say exactly what they are going to do," says Jackie.

ABOVE: Clearwater's Organic Dairy is now popular nationwide

ABOVE LEFT: More and more milk from the Clearwater's cows is finding its way into the factory as demand continues to grow

BELOW: The Clearwater's now employ three people to work in the custom-built on-site factory

Recently the Clearwater's took their commitment to a clean, green future another step forward by purchasing a Nissan Leaf, electric car, which has been fitted out with Clearwater Organic Dairy signage. "It was an important step for us; it reflects our ethos and what we stand for. We only wish we could afford an electric tractor!!"





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Make calf rearing stress-free with automation

Holm & Laue automated calf feeding systems can feed up to 150 calves the correct amount of food, at the right temperature, at the right time.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BELL-BOOTH



ABOVE: The Supershed Taranaki
LEFT: 2 H&L 100 with Automatic calf feeder
BELOW: Holm & Laue Hygiene Station

The systems are flexible. You can choose feeding colostrum, whole milk, CMR, part whole milk/part CMR, Queen of Calves, antibiotics, and electrolytes. The possibilities are wide and varied and can be tailored to feed individual calves on a specific diet, every time.

Bell-Booth has been installing Holm & Laue Automated Calf Feeding Systems into New Zealand dairy farms. Helping their farmers rear top quality calves day and night utilising new on farm technology to help whilst reducing labour costs.

Lower farm-operating costs

These farms have lowered staff costs.

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Their staff job-enjoyment has improved because of reduced incidence associated with manual milk feeding. No lifting heavy buckets of milk and if using powder/s just empty into the hopper and the Holm & Laue does the rest.

More time to enjoy the things you want to do

These farmers now have more time. More time to focus on farm management issues like feeding & breeding. And more time to spend with their families.

Lower labour costs

Holm & Laue enables farmers to lower their labour requirements. One farming operation were quoted saying, "I don't know how we would handle

feeding this number of calves each day under a manual system. It would require so much heavy lifting. We would definitely need more staff."

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HygieneStation

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Technology

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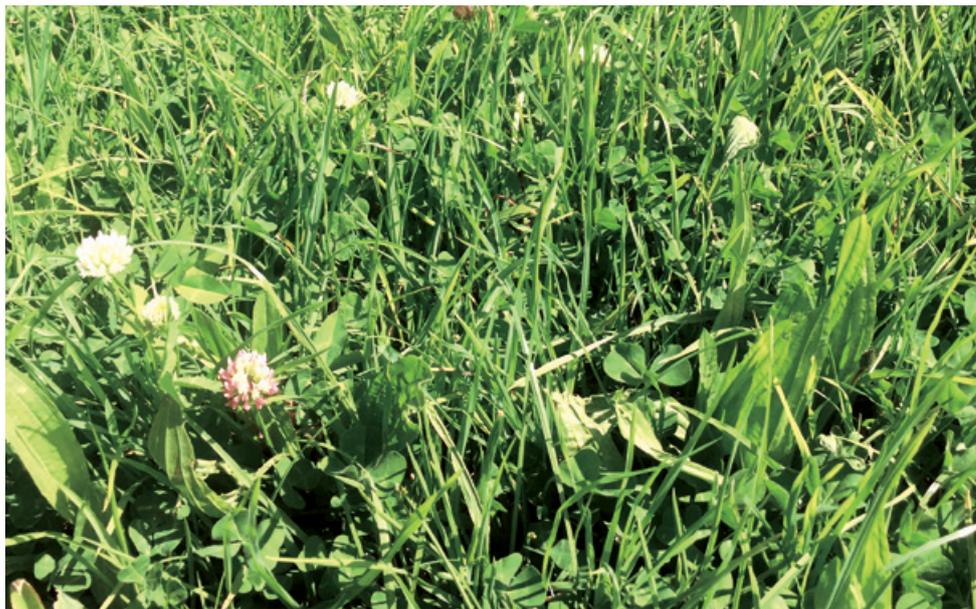
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The Endura mix for tough conditions



Grazeable farm land is seldom consistent across all paddocks, so in some situations it's important to consider the use of species other than perennial ryegrass.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM

Pasture mixes containing more than one species are classified as MSM's (multi species mixes). These blends of different species are an increasingly popular way to increase production and aid in pasture robustness/environmental functionality. With solid returns on-farm, now is a good time to consider renewing older pastures.

With the gravity of environmental regulation looming it's also important to consider species such as Ecotain environmental plantain. Pasture renewal should be considered a long-term investment and making the appropriate decision on what to plant is one of the most important decisions on-farm and for the environment.

Recent and more frequent dry summers and droughts have made many farmers question whether using solely ryegrass is the best for their situation. Whether it is dairy or sheep farmers, many people have raised issues about the persistence and production of ryegrass white clover mixes alone.

The good news is that there are good MSM's available which overcome many of the problems

ryegrass suffers, while still maintaining the benefits of the versatile species. This information provides details on one of these options, the new Endura Dryland pasture pack from Ruralco Seed.

This article will outline the functional benefits of the Prospect AR1 perennial ryegrass and Savvy cocksfoot mix and ways to use it on-farm.

Taking advantage of Prospect AR1's strong establishment speed and good tiller density allows for a high grazing intensity over the first few years of the pastures life. From a grass standpoint, mixing Prospect AR1 with Savvy is a real tool to drive yield in the first 2-3 years of the mix's life and supports an early return on investment before the pasture becomes more dominant in Savvy.

As with all pastures, over time they slowly begin the process of reversion. Having Savvy as the core underlying component of the mix ensures that the reversion is happening with a species of value rather than one being a hindrance to production (browntop). Over time, a blend of Savvy and Prospect AR1 will keep the production curve

flatter. In fact, having Savvy established in these mixes may actually increase the potential DM production over time.

Often when pasture is newly established there is an unlocking of nutrients in the soil profile which can setup the ryegrass plants to produce strongly at an early stage of development. As the soil begins to stabilise the Savvy will kick into gear and become a more dominant part of the mix giving the soil more structural integrity and robustness in dry conditions.

Having a MSM mix containing Savvy cocksfoot allows for a more efficient use of nitrogen to drive covers into the spring, autumn or winter. The response rates to urea nitrogen with Savvy in the mix will generally be higher than on pure ryegrass/white clover mixes in dryland conditions.

The Endura Dryland pack can also be used with Ecotain®. Ecotain is a world-first, environmentally functional plantain genotype which is highly compatible with Prospect, Savvy and Relish red clover. Ecotain should be used in this mix in any situation where dairy cattle are likely to be grazing to mitigate the impacts of N losses to the environment. Ecotain can reduce nitrate leaching from the urine patch by up to 89%*.

The mix also contains Nomad white clover and Relish red clover as legumes. Nomad has a very dense growth habit which aids in ground cover and weed suppression. While Relish, having the persistency advantage, contributes to feed quality and nitrogen throughput in challenging conditions. Similar to the Prospect/Savvy relationship, the Relish allows for an early return on investment, while Relish's outstanding persistence has really extended the value of using this red clover further into the life of this pasture. While Nomad is present as a resilient medium small leaved white clover for density and survival over time, through both vegetative survival and the ability to reseed and maintain a long term white clover seed bank.

Making good use of natural capital should be a top priority when considering what species to plant and a number of environments around New Zealand lend themselves to more than one species. This Endura Dryland pack is highly suitable for pivot corners, extremely free draining soils, k-Line areas with limited watering ability and medium fertility situations under spray irrigation.

In true dryland situations where rainfall is sub 700mm it would be advisable to consider the use of Coolomon subterranean clover and Viper balansa clover as additional components to this mix.

For more information on the Endura Dryland Pack contact your Ruralco Representative or Ruralco Seed or visit the Ruralco website.

* (Woods, 2019) Used with permission.

Where the Endura Dryland pack fits.

STATE OF PASTURE	SUITABLE OPTIONS
1. Mostly bare ground with no weeds present.e.g. post cropping	Undersow with Endura pack +/- Ecotain. Assess soil fertility.
2. Mostly bare ground with some weeds likely to re-establish.	Spray and direct-drill with endurance pack +/- Ecotain.
3. Most productive plants have been replaced by weeds.	Spray/cultivate and plant crop or short-term pasture before planting Endura pack.

Mycoplasma Bovis a disease worth eradicating



The discovery of Mycoplasma Bovis (M.bovis) last July in Canterbury dairy herds sent a shockwave through the region, with as many questions unanswered as answered about compensation, containment and its original source.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

However, the decision in late March to cull all cattle on properties infected with M.bovis has re-confirmed the government's determination to attempt to eliminate a disease it believes has not become endemic throughout the country.

As far as diseases go M.bovis is a particularly difficult one to identify and contain, with the ripples of its effects hitting every participant in the region's livestock industry, from transport operators, graziers, farmers and farm staff to varying degrees.

Recognising how difficult M.bovis can be to control and contain, the dairy industry and Ministry for Primary Industries moved quickly to develop a bulk milk test programme that included all the country's 9,000 dairy herds.

This involved testing three milk samples from every farm, including a bulk silo sample, and two from discarded milk of sick animals, a strong indicator an animal may be carrying the disease.

It was the results of this testing regime that gave government and authorities confidence M.bovis could still be eliminated by culling all cattle from infected herds. If this is achieved it would leave New Zealand and Norway as the only two countries in the world that would not have the disease.

Dr Richard Laven, one of the country's leading dairy production researchers has been working alongside MPI in surveying and assessing M.bovis infection levels.

The Massey researcher brings some clarity and insights to a disease that has created a high level of stress within those businesses most affected. He remains optimistic about M.bovis being eliminated from New Zealand, particularly in light of the latest announcement.

He said it was worth noting that before Christmas authorities thought most of the infected herds had been identified and isolated, until an additional group of infected farms were identified in the new year, but since then the disease appears to be in something of a hiatus as the industry also awaits the bulk results.

"We need to remember we do have the herds in the South Island, and only a couple in the North. If it was all over both islands I think we would be looking at something far harder to deal with. At this stage eradication is still feasible, but that does not mean it will be achievable."

"We need to remember M.bovis is a notoriously hard disease to pin down to specific animals in a specific herd."

Better diagnostic tools including the bulk milk testing process and also testing discarded milk on dairy farms gives him confidence MPI is on the right pathway to capturing infected herds.

"Testing antibodies in individual cows is useful, but those present are not specific to M.bovis alone, so there is also the risk you get false positive tests on an individual cow level."

"As far as diseases go M.bovis is a particularly difficult one to identify and contain, with the ripples of its effects hitting every participant in the region's livestock industry, from transport operators, graziers, farmers and farm staff to varying degrees."

So for New Zealand the best test at a herd level is the bulk milk test for the bacteria rather than antibodies. However, because infected cows can sporadically "shed" the infection, it is possible there can be infected cows within a herd that are not shedding when the test is done, prompting a "false negative" outcome for that herd.

"The most common reason a herd would go from being a "negative" infected herd to a "positive" infected herd is because a subsequent test detects a shedding cow."

But he sees the testing of discarded milk alongside the bulk milk test as a good reinforcement of the bulk test.

"The only risk is it is reliant upon farmers being required to provide two samples of the 'discard milk', whereas the bulk sample is run through the dairy processor."

Dr Laven confirms it is still not known where M.bovis came from, but that earlier reports of it only affecting herds that spent time indoors are completely wrong.

"M.bovis does not care if the cow is in the most comfortable barn around, or out in the paddock. It gets into her udder and presents as mastitis that cannot be cured, simple as that."

There are aspects however of the New Zealand dairy system that give him additional hope M.bovis may not spell wholesale disaster for the sector.

"In Europe in particular it is a major cause of pneumonia in calves, up to 50% of all cases are caused by it."

While working in Scotland he spent many days seeing the problem and duly reporting the disease under a government policy to collect more data on it.

"But for calves to get pneumonia does not just require M.bovis to be present. It also requires environmental challenges around housing, stress levels and the time calves are reared. In New Zealand we are generally not calving all year round, we are usually not rearing calves in winter, and pneumonia is not a common disease in calves here either."

He and his colleagues are currently collecting data to support this from farms rearing larger numbers of calves.

He hopes therefore that if calves here were exposed to M.bovis, they would develop a



level of immunity that would be invaluable if infection does continue in adult cow herds. He said the experience of van Leeuwen farms where the infection was first discovered highlights how debilitating it can be within an adult herd population.

“The managers there had over 160 cows infected at an early stage, and as difficult as it is to make that decision, the best option was to cull the entire milking herd.”

United Kingdom practice is to cull the entire herd when there is a major problem in adult cattle with mastitis and arthritis, similarly in Australia, Europe and United States when infection is discovered.

“United Kingdom practice is to cull the entire herd when there is a major problem in adult cattle with mastitis and arthritis, similarly in Australia, Europe and United States when infection is discovered.”

“This is because it is almost impossible to prove conclusively which cows in a particular infected herd are infected. It is so contagious as a pathogen, so when a large number of cows are infected it is almost impossible to accurately identify individual cows as the disease just rolls on through the entire herd.” He points out that while debate has swirled

around payment and compensation for herds culled, other countries do not provide any compensation and M.bovis is treated as a business risk to be allowed for.

“It is definitely a problem disease in those countries that have it, and people can and do go bankrupt if they get it in their herd. This has happened in herds in Tasmania which are as similar to New Zealand-style farming as anywhere”

But Dr Laven takes heart that indications to date are that it is not widespread, and so far no “surprise” clusters of the disease have been identified.

Based on the Australian experience New Zealand might expect to have 1% of herds infected, or about 120 herds.

Dr Laven says he feels confident predicting M.bovis’s effect on calves will be minimal, but cannot be so confident about infections in cows.

“Our cows undergo specific periods of stress, such as when they are dried off, and they spend time over winter grazing in close proximity, and there are a lot of cow movements around New Zealand.”

He says one estimate of the disease costing the dairy sector \$60 million over 10 years is only ballpark, but if accurate places it of less significance than the disease BVD.

“So in terms of impact on NZ Inc, it would be relatively low, but on an individual farm it can have a significant impact upon those

unfortunate enough to get it, and have a devastating impact on the lives and incomes of those unfortunate enough to have it in their herd.

“And those people who reported it early on should not feel guilty about doing so. It has meant that some very effective steps are in place now to control and very possibly eradicate it. Those original 162 cows infected would have quickly ballooned out to 300 and beyond, making it only harder to contain.”

So far no effective vaccine exists for the disease, such is the challenge it provides, with its multiple strains making it hard for vaccines to gain good immune response.

“If someone could have come up with one, they would have by now.”

“So from a New Zealand Inc view, it remains a good move to do what we can to eradicate M.bovis. What we can also expect is a need for New Zealand farms to be far better at farm border biosecurity which has been pretty poor in general until now.”



IMAGE:
Dr Richard Laven





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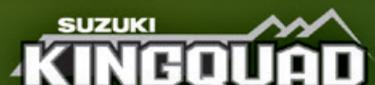
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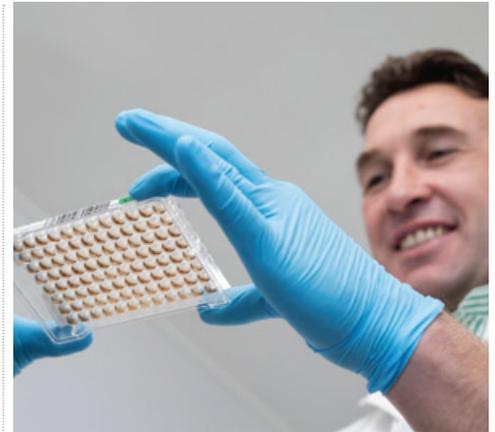
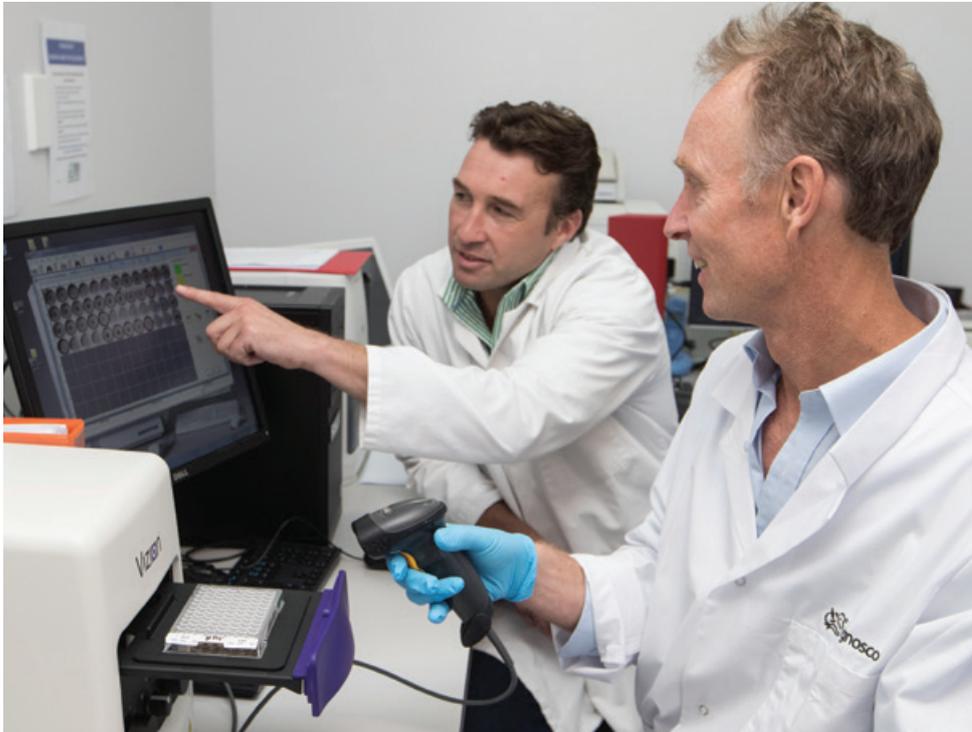


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New test to detect antibiotic resistance in dairy cows

A new Bayer initiative that involves the testing of bulk milk supply for antibiotic resistance, will allow farmers to more effectively treat mastitis in New Zealand.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BAYER ANIMAL HEALTH



ABOVE: Ray Castle undertaking the Dairy AntibioGram
LEFT: Ray Castle and Scott McDougall analysing the results from the Dairy AntibioGram test

Known as Dairy AntibioGram, the test will allow veterinarians to determine if antibiotic resistance to a mastitis treatment is present on a farm. If resistant bacteria are present, then the veterinarian will be able to prescribe a more effective antibiotic.

Bayer dairy veterinarian, Dr Ray Castle, says mastitis is a significant problem for dairy farmers and the country's five million cow dairy herd.

"Mastitis infects between 10–20% of the national dairy herd with a treatment cost of up to \$250 per cow. As a veterinarian, you want to make sure you're using the right antibiotics in the most responsible and effective way possible, which this test will allow.

"At the moment, we actually don't know how big a problem antibiotic resistance is in New Zealand. The Dairy AntibioGram test will give us some of that insight," says Dr Castle.

Dr Castle has been working on the testing and reporting methodology since becoming aware of a similar programme being run in the Netherlands in late 2016.

The technology involved had to be specifically adapted for New Zealand by Bayer, working in conjunction with R&D organisation Cognosco, which has been contracted to do the testing. As part of a consultation with a farmer, a veterinarian can request a sample of milk be

sent from the milk producer to the lab. The test is performed, and the results sent back to the veterinarian, who can then prescribe an appropriate antibiotic. Turnaround time is approximately three to four weeks.

Cognosco managing director and dairy veterinarian, Dr Scott McDougall, says the Dairy AntibioGram test is an important development for the dairy industry.

"Currently there is no ongoing surveillance program for antibiotic resistance in the dairy industry in New Zealand, and relatively few milk samples are submitted for antibiotic resistance testing.

"This means that the majority of the time, veterinarians are prescribing without knowing either the pathogen or its sensitivity to antibiotics. There is a risk of ineffective therapies being used.

"Dairy AntibioGram, provides us with an easy way of screening for antibiotic sensitivities in dairy herds, which will lead to more prudent use of antibiotics across the dairy industry."

"Over time we will develop an understanding of resistance patterns across the country, potentially identifying if there are emerging problems with antibiotic resistance, enabling us to then focus our attention on these herds."

Dr Castle says ideally, he would like to see all dairy farms in the country have their milk undergo the Dairy AntibioGram test.

"Antibiotics are an important tool in keeping our dairy herds healthy, but we need to ensure they're not overused and that they are actually working. "The Dairy AntibioGram test will give us this clarity and go a long way to ensuring effective treatment of mastitis in our dairy herds."

About Dairy AntibioGram

Dairy AntibioGram is a new test that shows how sensitive bacteria are to different mastitis treatments. The test is easy to have done as it is performed on bulk milk samples taken from milk processors.

A Dairy AntibioGram test will provide valuable information that will allow farmers to:

- Identify the current resistance status of their herd
- Ensure they are using the most effective mastitis treatments specific to their herd
- Monitor their resistance status and identify any changes over time
- Compare their resistance status with industry benchmarks
- Develop biosecurity plans to protect a good resistance status
- Manage their herd status and make more informed decisions when integrating stock outside their closed system.
- Help the dairy industry demonstrate that it is using antibiotics in an effective, responsible and sustainable manner.

For more information about Dairy AntibioGram, you should consult with your veterinarian.

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FAR LEFT: Laing Properties deliver a new transportable home to a local farmer in Methven

LEFT: Grant Laing, Managing Director

Laing Properties have had a few busy years working with earthquake affected homes and customers in the Christchurch area.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY LAING PROPERTIES

This year brings new challenges and owner Grant Laing is excited about the upcoming developments in the rural market and working again with the farmers of Mid Canterbury. Having been in the industry over 25 years Laing Properties is a third-generation business and Grant recognises the importance of personal service and a trusted reputation - "even in this fast-paced life, people still enjoying working with a familiar brand and people who have a proven track record."

Laing Properties are a construction and building relocation company and have several areas of specialisation for residential, commercial and rural clients. They design and build prefabricated transportable homes that can be delivered to site and are ideal for farm worker accommodation. Second hand relocatable buildings are another area of expertise at Laing Properties. They have a selection of both residential and commercial buildings available for sale that can be refurbished and relocated to any area. They can also assist customers who have an existing home or buildings and want to move them to a more workable setting. This is particularly useful for farmers who have bought additional land for the farm or if irrigator paths mean that buildings need to be shifted. Laing Properties can use their own specialist

equipment and expertise to make this happen. Grant comes from a civil works background and then branched into building relocation and prefabricated homes. He enjoys the hands-on side of the business as well as dealing with clients. "People are very surprised that even with the initial first enquiry they will deal with the owner who has spent more than 33 years in the industry, but excellent customer service is something we pride ourselves on." Grant's son Myles runs the construction side of the business and the family operated enterprise is something that Grant believes is key for customers today. There is a team of over 30 staff at Laing Properties and this is expected to grow this year thanks to a high volume of orders for a Laing Properties constructed transportable home or relocatable building.

As with any industry Grant is aware of new trends in the market and there are two areas that have particular relevance for farming clients. Firstly, there is the increase in popularity of Air BNB and farm stays, "With farming it's hard to look beyond the standard income streams but considering the growth of the tourist market and Air BNB I think it's definitely something farmers should think about. Many of them are surrounded by a beautiful setting and with the right property available for guests it could definitely be a winner." The second trend that is significant for farmers is succession planning. According to Grant when the farm is

being handed over to the younger generation not everyone wants to move off the land and be closer to town. Laing Properties have several retired clients who have subdivided off a small parcel of land and built a relocatable home on it in order to stay on the farm but ultimately if they need to move their home it can be taken elsewhere.

Laing Properties offer three ranges of transportable buildings; Popular, Sanctuary and Smart. The Popular range is ideal for the budget and value conscious while providing flexibility with floor plans for future changes. Sanctuary offers more customisation for clients while the Smart Range offers a more contemporary urban style and is designed in modules allowing the client to add further modules when their lifestyle needs change. All three ranges offer customisation and design options which is something Grant believes is important for all his clients. "More often than not people use our plans as just a starting point. I think in general Kiwis always love bespoke design and it doesn't always cost a fortune for a custom-built home."

Prices at Laing Properties for a 3-bed home start around \$190,000 plus site establishment costs (consents, power, etc). The business is a member of Master Builders and several other trade associations and they don't use sub-contractor builders at Laing Properties—they use in-house qualified builders and all project managers are Licensed Building Practitioner qualified. In terms of time frames customers can expect delivery of an existing building within three months. For a custom-built home, it takes between 6–9 months and that's from the initial enquiry to opening the door to your brand-new home.

Grant and his team can guide you through all the available options to come up with the perfect solution to meet your requirements. Anyone interested in building or relocating can go to www.laing.co.nz for more information on their range of services. As Grant proudly puts it "if it fits on a house trailer we can do it!"



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Organic farming can heal many ills

There's something for everyone in the realm of organic farming.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

As far as Bill Martin is concerned, it's all about sustainability. The Training College Manager at Lincoln University's Biological Husbandry Unit Organics Trust (BHU) is happy to see a surge in enthusiasm for organic food production as younger generations become more aware of environmental concerns.

However, he says various organics enthusiasts approach the discipline from different angles, with some focusing more on creating social

enterprises or promoting the health benefits of eating locally-sourced, organically-grown produce.

"Social enterprises can involve equipping troubled young people with marketable skills, while we have eateries such as the Dukes of Sandwich producing healthier, organically-sourced food options."

"For me, organic farming is mainly about reducing our environmental footprint, but these varying approaches are all part of the big picture."

He says the burgeoning popularity of organic production in recent years means that BHU graduates are now taking what they have learned into a broader range of sectors.

"It's not just about growing, wholesaling and retailing food anymore. They're going into schools and teaching primary and secondary schoolers about the importance of sustainable farming and gardening, and really starting to embed the philosophy into the education system."

As far as conventional agricultural practices are concerned, he says farmers should be encouraged to optimise their production, rather than maximise it at the expense of the environment.

"We need to change our agricultural paradigm and re-evaluate our priorities. This is already happening in the Northern Hemisphere, where the voting public sees a

lot of environmental destruction first-hand, which makes them stop and think.

"In New Zealand, we're not at that tipping point yet, so a lot of people aren't too concerned, but we are on track to experience more problems in the future."

"For me, organic farming is mainly about reducing our environmental footprint, but these varying approaches are all part of the big picture."

"If we're going to see an improvement in the environment, sacrifices will need to be made, which may be a bitter pill to swallow. But the agricultural sector should shift the priority from maximising production and profit to ensuring the sustainability of the entire system."

"The reality of changing the paradigm is accepting there might be less to go around."

Mr Martin also points out that the food safety aspect of organic production could have important ramifications for human health."

"Organic produce is much more reliably regulated than non-organic food, with strict standards and yearly audits. However, there has been a convergence between organic and conventional growers, with the latter adopting more and more sustainable practices."

"Organic produce is becoming more accessible as people learn more about it. There's definitely a trend towards consumers buying more organic products."

Mr Martin says he applies the sustainability philosophy "across the board" in his teachings.

"Our courses offer a good grounding in the principles of organic agriculture, teaching the philosophies and histories of organics and providing practical knowledge of how they are applied."

"Organic produce is becoming more accessible as people learn more about it. There's definitely a trend towards consumers buying more organic products."

"They are also designed to appeal to those wanting to develop their understanding of tikanga and customary Māori practices for traditional food-growing."

"Students can then use their skills in many different ways, depending on what interests them. Many are going in to social enterprise and looking at horticulture as therapy, as well as enjoying the sense of community that this type of organisation creates."



Indeed, the community nature of the organics industry is a major drawcard for current BHU student, Aaron Rowe, who is studying towards his Certificate in Applied Organic Horticulture.

He also works as a volunteer at Cultivate Christchurch, which operates small-scale, intensive organic food production at various local urban farms.

The organisation provides work experience and skills to young people in need and runs an internship programme funded by the goods supplied by the farms.

"I volunteered at Cultivate because of its community-minded view," Mr Rowe says. "I met staff there who studied at the BHU and thought that learning the corresponding theory for the work I was doing would be great. My engagement in study happened organically and I would not have it any other way."

Mr Rowe began learning from home, completing a Certificate in Organic Horticulture by correspondence, then moving on to his current studies in Applied Organic Horticulture.

"The information and skills I learned translated to any employed role at Cultivate. On a personal level, it galvanises my sense of masculinity, as it allows me to provide food for the whānau."

Mr Rowe says he hopes his studies will "attract bountiful yields at home and in the workplace".

"The knowledge shared in the course coupled with practical application makes me a more awesome employee and imparts the life skill of organic food production."

He says programmes like Cultivate Christchurch are important, as they support high-need groups through "the visceral medium of organic food production".



ABOVE: Aaron Rowe

ABOVE TOP: Bill Martin

OPPOSITE: Organic food production is increasing in popularity as younger generations become more aware of environmental issues

Growing up in South Auckland, he became familiar with the often dysfunctional behaviour of his peers at high school.

"South Auckland, I love you, but you're the crime capital of New Zealand. I attributed the behaviour I was seeing to environmental circumstances out of the students' control, such as problematic home lives. But I saw glimpses of tenderness in these individuals, which inspired hope."

"I think businesses that pursue social outcomes, such as Cultivate, are fundamental in turning the tides on dysfunctional behaviour amongst youth."

Mr Rowe says that everyone stands to benefit from having more functional members of society.

"Michael Jackson put it well when he asserted, 'Heal the world, make it a better place for you and for me and the entire human race.'"

To find out more about the BHU and how to enrol to study at the training college, see www.bhu.org.nz

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Attention to detail in autumn pays

By April, all the hard work farmers did in late summer to prepare their deer for autumn will be bearing fruit. Most of their hinds will be in-fawn and their weaners will be settled down and growing on quality pasture or crop at up to 300 grams a day.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DEER INDUSTRY NZ

In other words, by April some of the key building blocks of deer herd performance over the next 12 months are now in place. Yet it's not a good time for farmers to relax. Continued attention to detail in autumn will pay dividends, says Deer Industry NZ producer manager Tony Pearse.

Looking after the stags

During the next few weeks the roar will subside and by the end of April—or earlier for those who want to tighten up the breeding season—it will be time to remove stags from their mating mobs. While stags inevitably lose weight and condition over the rut, with targeted feeding they can rapidly recover condition in the four week window before 1 June.

Because their rumens have restricted capacity at this time of year, it is critical to offer them quality feed with the highest energy content possible. Saved pasture, high quality silage or crops are all good for this. Concentrates may also be fed, but introduce them to the diet gradually and take care with feed placement to avoid aggression and injury.

Stags that are not provided with the quality feed they need to regain condition may have lower velvet yields. It will also make them more prone to parasitism and other diseases.

Adult deer have high levels of immunity against parasites and don't normally need drenching, unless their immune response is compromised by a stressor, such as the loss of body condition during the roar.

Experience tells us that post-rut drenching of wapiti bulls is essential. Whether or not to drench red stags is an individual farm decision, best made in consultation with your vet, but many farmers will be drenching their top red stags especially those that were bought in this season. Any drench should be administered promptly after the stags' removal from their mating groups, preferably in mid-late April.

When planning winter feed allocations, get your feed tested and measure crop yields, to ensure each stock class gets the quantity and quality of feed they need. This is critical, especially with silage, as it is a bulky feed, of variable quality. If silage is of low quality, deer may be unable to eat enough of it to meet their nutrition needs. It is also important to



have a plan for how you will feed your deer during adverse weather events.

In winter, stags are limited in their ability to grow, but their maintenance feed requirements are high. Pasture silage alone is unlikely to be an adequate feed at this time. A good feed is high in ME, such as early saved spring pasture or baleage made from chicory, red clover or lucerne. This can be fed ad-lib with additional grain.

When feed planning, make sure reserves of quality feed will still be available in spring. While unsoiled spring grass is an ideal feed for velvetting stags, on many farms not enough will be available in August to meet their requirements. Luxury high energy supplementation may be needed in the three to four weeks before button casting, especially with older stags, to enable them to achieve their genetic potential for antler growth.

Maximising breeding performance

The ideal is for all hinds to conceive in the first cycle and to hold their pregnancies through to a successful birth in late spring, followed by a successful weaning in autumn. In reality this doesn't always happen.

It makes sense to pregnancy scan to age the foetus and to identify dry hinds for culling.

Usually this is done in May and early June at between 30 and 80 days gestation.

By drafting hinds into mobs based on their due date, pastures can be better utilised and managed in late spring/early summer.

Foetal ageing is also important where AI is being used, in order to work out whether the AI stag or the back-up stag was the successful sire. Once the estimated foetal age is known, the birth date can be predicted by adding 234 days to the estimated conception date (240 days for crossbred red/wapiti hinds).

Fawns from early-conceiving hinds are heavier at weaning as they will have had more time to grow and their mums will have enjoyed better feed quality in early lactation. To capture these advantages, more farmers are selecting for an earlier-conceiving herd by culling late-conceiving hinds and using stags with high BVs for earlier conception, a new selection trait for which there is considerable genetic variation.

Weaner growth and health

Many deer farmers winter their weaners on crops. While transitioning onto a crop is somewhat easier in deer than in cattle, it still takes time for their rumens to adjust.

Providing an element of consistency to the

ABOVE: In winter, stags are limited in their ability to grow, but their maintenance feed requirements are high

LEFT: While well-fed weaners in a low-stress environment can generally handle winter with few issues, it is important to have a well thought-out deer health plan

diet, such as by feeding high quality baleage, or grain through feeders before and after transition, can help the adjustment and ensure weight gains continue.

Well-fed weaners with adequate shelter and a low stress environment can generally handle poor weather with few issues. However, additional stressors such as high parasite burdens, transport, or abrupt feed changes can cause weaners to stop eating, allowing yersinia bacteria to multiply, causing disease. Deciding whether to vaccinate for yersinia or for that matter, clostridial diseases or leptospirosis, all warrant a chat with the vet. Indeed, a growing number of deer farmers are now completing an annual deer health review with their vet to ensure they are doing everything they need to do when it comes to deer health and maximising every chance for better productivity. In terms of keeping deer productivity and welfare on track, a deer health review can be a very fruitful investment.

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Goat success no longer a fairy story



The heady days of the share market boon in the mid-eighties in the larger New Zealand cities was symbolised by many things.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY MEGAN GRAHAM

More Porsches parked in city streets than Kiwis had ever seen before, long champagne fuelled lunches were the norm, usually to celebrate the launch of companies with names ending in "Corp." Of course there was also the resounding hangover following the collapse in late 1987. But one of the least likely symbols of that hedonistic time, and one of the victims of its collapse was the goat industry.

As share fuelled money sought out new investment opportunities, goats and particularly Angora goats soon attracted millions of dollars, and the numbers farmed grew into their thousands.

Clinton in Southland could not have been further from that high rolling environment where Queen Street farmers threw hundreds of thousands into such ventures. But local farmers David and Robyn Shaw had also quietly begun a goat enterprise that continues today, and is now on a foundation that those early investors often lacked when seeking big fast returns 30 years ago. David and Robyn were initially interested in the mohair sector back then, but wisely decided they could not justify the eye watering prices being paid for mohair goats.

"There was a lot of hype around the sector, and of course a lot of investment money that went into that hype, along with plenty of Queen St farmers," says David.

The share market crash also rippled around the world and Dawsons, the large UK textile company who owned the famous Ballantyne and Pringle knitwear brands was not immune. They had fostered cashmere production and written 25-year lucrative cashmere supply contracts which eventually collapsed.

"A lot of farmers had been interested in goats because while the sharemarket was booming, farmers were hurting, paying 18-20% interest rates, getting \$2 for ewes and only \$10 for lambs, so goats were appealing as a means of diversification."

The couple had started with 50 goats in 1985, utilising them as a means of weed control on



ABOVE: David & Robyn Shaw started in 1985 with 50 goats used as weed control, 30 years later they've launched NZ Cashmere to co-develop the cashmere industry

BELOW: After not testing fineness for a while, the Shaws found that their flock average was 14.5 microns

their property, and coming to enjoy working with the intelligent, inquisitive animals. They had struggled to get a return from the cashmere fibre, but elected to stick with their herd through the downturn because of the genetic gains, which ultimately ended up being a hiatus of many years for the goat fibre industry.

"Over that time we happened to acquire some very good quality genetic stock, from all around the country and even as far away as Northland."

The goats had a continuing role in farm weed control, and breeding over the years had removed the foot problems often associated with them in the 80s, while the heritability for fine cashmere fibre is strong, making gains in quality achievable in short breeding timeframes, often only two generations.

With no cashmere fibre market, David was faced with giving up or creating a solution. His four legged

weed eaters could be contributing even more to the farm, through harvesting their fine fibre.

"We decided to start testing their fibre for fineness and quality again, we had not done that for a while. We found the fibre was down to 12 microns, with a flock average of 14.5."

This was well ahead of David's expectations, putting the best of his flock in the top 2% of what is produced in China, the world's largest cashmere producer.

They also quickly found that there were companies in New Zealand processing cashmere, which had been imported from China.

David says he could start to see an opportunity emerging that fitted with the increasing need for New Zealand producers to be able to weave a story around their products, rather than simply pushing a processing commodity out on to the market.

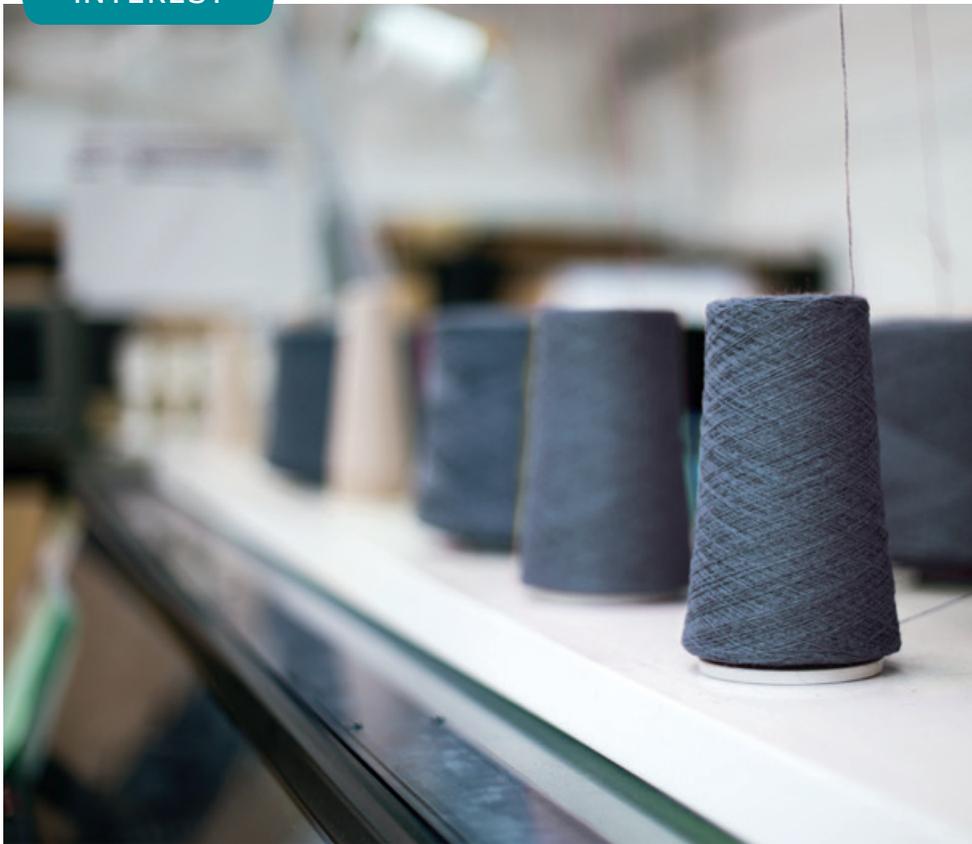
"The international market prices were also strong and stable with 16 micron fibre worth about US\$100/kg, which was very close to what it was when things were booming."

Those values put the potential per head return at \$20 to \$40 a head.

In trying to find a processor who related to David's concept of "telling a story" about the provenance of the Kiwi cashmere, he met Peri Drysdale of fibre garment company "Untouched World."

Her company had pioneered the Merino-Possum blended fibre and also the first fashion company in the world to be recognised by the United Nations for its sustainability practices.





ABOVE: Cashmere yarn in the knit room factory
BELOW: They now have 700 head of goats playing a key role in areas that would often require more chemical control

“Peri is very supportive of developing a New Zealand provenance cashmere brand, where customers get to learn the entire story behind the product, where it is from, who grew it and how it was farmed.”

David is presently working closely with Peri taking some of the fibre through a trial supply process.

“The beauty of working with goat fibre now, 30 years after it first started to be farmed is that there is a lot we already know about it.

“We understand its properties of warmth, fineness and compatibility, and the technology to process and spin it up is well established. This puts us in a good position to build the market, compared to all those years ago when there was plenty going on in building flocks up, but less going on in terms of market development and consumer focus.”

The challenge now David and Robyn have established their fibre’s quality, is to build the volumes that processors like Untouched World require. “The amount they require alone is far more than we can produce ourselves.”

Current New Zealand production only amounts to 1 tonne, and David estimates about 25,000 animals would produce 5–10 tonne, a start to meet domestic demand.

The provenance of New Zealand sourced cashmere will play strongly to consumers as conscious about the environment as they are about looking good.

While being the largest producer of cashmere, China is facing significant environmental problems caused by overstocking of goats in the

Mongolia region, exacerbating the constant creep of the Gobi desert over grazing country.

Here at home the story of how the goats integrate into the Shaw’s 400ha drystock property is compelling.

The couple sell 1,000–1,500 head of cattle a year on the 320ha effective grazing area and several thousand lambs.

They now have 700 head of goats playing a key role in areas that would often require more chemical control and leaving clover for other stock.

This includes controlling weeds, particularly thistles whose heads they have a fondness for. They prove to be relatively easy care compared to the sheep. Thirty years of selection and no Angora influence means few foot problems in cashmere goats, and David appreciates not having to crutch and dag them.

“We have made a few modifications, putting in electric outriggers at knee height on fences, and

adding an extra rail in the sheep yards. They are extremely intelligent animals, they will usually follow you where you need them to go and they are pleasant animals to work with.”

They kid in October, but often have twins, sometimes triplets and even the odd set of quads.

“This spring delivered about 380 kids from 180 does and some hoggets, and their behaviour at kidding is a bit like deer, they like to have a place to hide their kids that they come back to.”

They will place tractor tyres cut in half in strategic places for the does to camp their kids.

David can shear the goats himself, usually done with the goat standing up and says part of their appeal to older farmers is their lighter body weight, almost half that of a modern 80kg ewe.

“We would use a 17 tooth comb on them and they handle it pretty well, and we can do about 200 a day.”

With wool returns sitting perennially low and many farmers facing a big hit in their annual wool cheque, David believes the high value of goats’ fibre and their ability to integrate into farm systems will draw interest from farmers.

“There are plenty out there who would have been familiar with goats when prices were particularly good, and who would feel comfortable bringing them back on to the farm again. The return of fibre at \$20–40 a head looks very good when you are lucky to be getting \$10–15 a head off sheep.”

The fineness of the fibre is striking, with yarn counts up to grade “48”, or capable of having one gram spun out 48 metres, a standard yarn type.

Ramping up goat numbers for commercial use on farms should not be a big barrier. He points to the high numbers of feral goat populations and meat flocks already in many areas.

“And all goats have a level of cashmere fibre in them, it is basically their downy winter coat. The good thing about it is the heritability factors are very high and today we have 30+ years of selection to build from.”

“Our first target is 25,000 animals which will produce 5–10 tonne of fibre, and the processors say they can scale from there.”



RIGHT: David says the farmer interest has been strong and they are optimistic they will reach their target of 5–10 tonne of fibre produced this year

He estimates a farmer starting with foundation does would lift fibre quality quickly with the high value fibre coming immediately from improved kids.

“But you do have to allow for that time—if the quality bucks went out now, the resulting kids will not be shorn until 2019.”

David says since he and Robyn have started seriously pushing the cashmere potential early in the new year, farmer interest has been strong. They have already committed a number of bucks to farmers interested in breeding up the quality of their flock’s fibre.

“It really also becomes a case of having to have that critical mass there and consolidating the clip, and getting the supply on a contractual basis. We have the people with the expertise to process it.”

He is also aware that the cashmere story has to be very much driven by what consumers are needing, rather than what farmers or processors are capable of working with, and he acknowledges there are lessons to be learned from the wool industry.

“We definitely cannot afford to play in the commodity space. We have to converse with our customers early on, ultimately the money comes from the person who wears the clothing, you have to create an emotional connection with them.”

“The person with the closest connection to the consumer will also capture the greatest portion of value, that has been well proven in the past. Our relationship with Untouched World goes a long way to achieving that.”

He can see the “halo” effect having an element of cashmere in products can also have on the final product’s value, similar to the value attributed to having Manuka honey in a food product.

On a recent trip to Milan where he met with fibre processors he noticed the near reverence with which cashmere was spoken about, and the move to try and combine it into woollen garments to help boost the final retail value.

“There was a distinct quality scale of difference and price as you went from (say) 5% cashmere to 100%.”

David admits he and Robyn are glad they re-confirmed their commitment and he is optimistic there will be other farmers out there keen to do the same.

“I guess I got to the point where I felt if we did not pick up on this nobody else was going to do it. We are certain that there is huge potential in the next five to 10 years in building farming systems around cashmere goats.”

The goats’ ability to offer a low impact, easy care solution to farm pasture quality, and the enduring value of their fibre means they deserve more than to simply run wild and should have a place at the table of high value, sustainable land use options.



Cashmere numbers and facts

WHAT IS IT?

Effectively the “winter coat” for goats. Goats have an element of cashmere fibre in their genetic makeup, and breeding can increase this relatively quickly in offspring.

CHINA AND MONGOLIA

The world’s largest producers of cashmere producing the bulk of the 8,000t/year are China and Mongolia. Overstocking is causing significant environmental issues that threaten the sector’s future there.

CURRENT NZ PRODUCTION:

Less than 1t.

POTENTIAL FOR NEW ZEALAND:

David Shaw believes a flock of 100,000 would build a viable export industry. (Already 120,000 goats slaughtered annually in NZ)

VALUE:

International fibre prices are about US\$100/kg, and are similar to what they were in the boom years of the 80s.

GLOBAL CASHMERE SALES:

Global sales are growing at 3.86% per year and estimated to reach US\$3.1B of the US\$60 fashion market.

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Feeding growing pigs from weaning to plate

Even though modern pig genotypes are considerably leaner the genotypes of 20 years ago, the fundamental building blocks of nutrition remain unchanged.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY NRM



Despite this, personal preference for different breeds of pigs and variation in objective when choosing pigs for your property means that there is considerable variation in the pig genetics found across Canterbury and New Zealand. As genetics play an important role in how a pig uses the nutrients contained in the feed it consumes, it is important to know what stock you have and how they should be fed.

When feeding any livestock, it is important to ensure that essential nutrients (energy, protein or more specifically amino acids, vitamins and minerals) are provided in balanced and sufficient amounts to support growth or production. To put this into perspective, consider the nutritional demands of a modern weaned pig, which are considerable—a weaned pig of 25kg can grow to 100kg in about 6 months, while it takes a large human at least 20 years to get to that weight.

Supplementing your pigs' diet with reject vegetables or waste milk on a dairy farm can be a good way of reducing waste and you may even consider feeding leftover table scraps to your pigs. But, these feedstuffs pose a potential threat to the health of your pigs, as well as others, and extra care must be taken when these supplements are fed.

Waste vegetables can be a useful source of nutrients particularly for older animals. However, fibrous, high moisture feeds (such as pasture, cabbages and other vegetables) should only be fed in moderation. Most pigs are unable to eat enough of these high moisture feeds to support good growth rates or high levels of milk production in sows. Feeds like potatoes, turnips and swedes can be a good source of energy but are generally high in moisture and low in protein and essential minerals required for muscle growth and development and bone integrity respectively.

Feeding waste milk to pigs is a common practice and although milk provides a good source of protein, feeding large quantities of milk can lead to digestive upsets. Milk fed pigs must be supplemented with a high energy feed and trace minerals if pigs are to remain healthy and achieve good growth rates. Feeding milk that has not been heat treated can also help to support the spread of disease, particularly where milk is not produced on the same farm where pigs are kept. The risk of spreading disease is the main reason behind the strict laws controlling the feeding of food waste to pigs in New Zealand. For example, feeding contaminated food waste to pigs is considered to have been the most likely cause of

the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in the UK in 2001. Under New Zealand law, any food waste that has come into contact with any meat, cooked or raw, must be heat treated to over 100°C for 1 hour to ensure that any bacteria or viruses present in the waste will be destroyed. These laws apply equally to commercially prepared and home-produced food.

Properly treated food waste, reject vegetables and waste milk, can all be used to help reduce the cost of feeding pigs. However, to ensure optimum health and welfare of pigs and to support production in rapidly growing young animals or high producing sows, balanced feeds that provide appropriate levels of energy, high quality protein and essential minerals and vitamins should make up the vast majority of the animal's diet.

A balanced diet is particularly important for growing pigs and sufficient supply of vitamins, minerals and trace minerals will support skeletal growth, animal health and wellbeing. NRM Little Pig Tucker is designed to supply these critical nutrients in sufficient quantities to maximise growth. This nutrient dense feed is also ideal for lactating sows, as they have a high nutrient requirement to support milk production.

NRM Big Pig Nuts are formulated to provide a balanced source of energy, protein and essential minerals and are ideal for feeding to growing pigs over 65kg and to dry sows and boars. NRM Big Pig Nuts also contain a balanced level of fibre to support gut health in mature pigs.

Feeding a balanced diet to growing pigs from weaning through to slaughter not only ensures that pigs grow rapidly but helps to ensure that the carcass composition and meat quality is desirable, while the added vitamins and minerals contained in a balanced feed help to ensure that animals remain healthy throughout the growing phase.

NRM products are available from all Ruralco Farm Supplies Stores, so head in today or call 0800 787 256.



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Ram harness revival

Ram harnesses are undergoing something of a revival as farmers find them to be a useful tool in making the most efficient use of feed resources.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND



While there is nothing new about these leathery contraptions, a new generation of farmers is finding them to be useful at ensuring they are making the most efficient use of feed at mating and lambing. They are particularly valuable in drought years or when grass is slow to come away.

Very simply, harnesses will indicate whether a ewe has been mated and these ewes can then be taken off high quality "flushing" forages and put back onto maintenance rations (with a back-up ram).

The Hodgen family, who farm in North Canterbury, found the use of ram harnesses has thrown some surprising results. They discovered 93% of the ewes were mated in their first cycle and so could be put straight back onto maintenance feed with a follow-up ram.

"It's phenomenal how much feed we have saved for the price of ram harness and crayon," says Dan Hodgen.

The ewes remain marked and at set-stocking were run in mobs according to their mating dates. This meant the family was not set-stocking earlier than they need to and management over lambing was much more targeted.

Reece Cleland manages the 2,700ha Annavale Station near Springfield in Central Canterbury. With limited cultivable country

upon which to grow high-quality feed for flushing their 4,500 ewes, he has found ram harnesses to be a cheap and easy way to ensure this feed is partitioned into the ewes that need it.

He says he begins flushing the ewes a fortnight before the harnessed rams go out. The rams are out with the ewes for 32 days. When the ewes are marked they are removed from the mob and run out onto the hill country with a follow-up ram.

Reece drafts the ewes every three to four days and finds that 90 per cent of ewes are mated within the first cycle.

Scanning results showed that the ram harnesses were "surprisingly accurate." Reece says out of the 50 ewes that weren't marked 25% were dry.

Canterbury-based farm consultant Wayne Allan says there are pluses and minuses to using ram harnesses – but they can provide valuable information that can help in the allocation of feed resources and management around mating and lambing.

He says today's ewes tend to be heavier and more fecund, so a higher proportion of the flock can be mated within the first cycle (80–90%). If marked, these ewes can be put back onto maintenance—although Allan cautions

against under-feeding ewes at this stage.

At lambing, the marked ewes can then be managed according to their lambing date, so later-lambing ewes can be set-stocked later which again provides an opportunity to be more strategic with feed resources.

Allan points out that foetal aging at scanning does provide this same information, but it is slightly more expensive and doesn't allow for feed management over mating.

He says the downside of ram harnesses is the work involved in changing crayons and, on properties with a lot of scrub, there is always a danger of the harnessed ram getting caught up, or losing crayons.

On larger, extensive, properties with large numbers of rams, the logistics of finding rams and changing crayons can make them a less impractical option.

Where the focus is on determining when rather than whether the ewes have been mated, Allan suggests not putting the harnesses on until 10–17 days into mating. This reduces the workload and means unmarked ewes will be early lambing or are dry.

Ram harnesses are available from all Ruralco Farm Supplies Stores, so head in today or call 0800 787 256.



New director adds depth to Ruralco board

The New Zealand rural services market is one of the most competitive in the world, and Ruralco is working hard at every level to maintain and even improve that competitiveness.

WORDS BY RICHARDS RENNIE

From the type of products offered in the retail stores, the advice to support farmers' needs and the business units getting them the best deals—all of it is underpinned by having the best people possible at every level.

Chairman Alister Body is welcoming the appointment of experienced, respected corporate director and advisor Brent Wheeler to the ATS/Ruralco Board. Alister says Brent's appointment reflects the commitment by Ruralco to invest in the best people to optimise the co-operative's current value to shareholders, and develop opportunities to build on that into the future.

"Brent brings a wide level of corporate and co-operative experience to the role, with the ability to relate to all levels of a business like Ruralco that now encompasses multi-faceted aspects of the rural service industry."

While qualified as an economist, Brent has spent the past 20 years in directorship and advisory roles to commercial businesses ranging from insurance to electricity and dairy companies. He has a passion for collaborative integration of interests and objectives that at first glance may appear disparate and untenable.

His approach has helped many businesses and organisations to make better decisions and maintain their competitive edge by providing advice well-tempered by experience, across the range of business scale.

"It is Brent's appreciation of the nuances that go with co-operative ownership and operation that was a particularly compelling reason for his appointment."

Alister says while historically not uncommon in the rural sector, co-operatives are expected to operate in what has become a highly competitive, corporate dominated environment. However they are also expected to acknowledge the needs and expectations of their shareholders, so often also their customers and can be a difficult beast to balance.

"That challenge can be even greater when it is a co-operative like Ruralco, tasked with being a purchasing co-op aiming to keep costs down for its shareholding customers. You have the challenge of trying to achieve that, and remaining a sustainable operation that is capable of generating a surplus for those same shareholders."

Ruralco has ridden the volatile agricultural commodity price cycles well in the past decade, partly helped by being physically located in the country's most diverse agricultural region, but also by being light on its feet when playing against the heavy hitting "big box" farm service companies.

"Having Brent on board will be immensely helpful for helping us plot our pathway for the next 10 years. We know the commodity volatility is here to stay, but also that the traditional means of communicating, advising and retailing to rural customers is also changing quickly, and he who hesitates is lost. We cannot stand still assuming the next 10 years will be 'pretty much' the same as the last."

"This also comes as our rural customers and shareholders are grappling with some of the biggest changes New Zealand agriculture has ever had to deal with. While in the past there may have been individual "events" like the formation of the EEC in the early '70s or Rogernomics in the mid-80s, now the shifts are coming in multiples."

"Brent brings a wide level of corporate and co-operative experience to the role, with the ability to relate to all levels of a business like Ruralco that now encompasses multi-faceted aspects of the rural service industry."

Environmental expectations, climate change and alternative proteins are just some of the big impacts coming all at once, rather than in a timely, ordered fashion.

"As a service provider we have to be aware of the farm gate impact those shifts are having, and adapt to remain relevant to farmers as they in turn are forced to shift their business models around the demands those events are bringing."

For his part Brent is relishing the opportunity to be part of a rural service co-operative that, thanks in part to its size and to the depth of talent it has on board, is superbly positioned to capitalise on the changes in years ahead.

"The challenge now for Ruralco is to answer the question 'how do we grow from here?'" after having got it right through some tough times in the past 10 years, it is actually a stand out model for that success," he says.

Brent sees Ruralco as an interesting example of an organisation that captures what is happening across many different areas of retail and service industries.

"We are seeing this move to digital retailing that means retailing is going to look nothing like it did only 10 years ago, with millennial buyers including farmers who want to not

only research the product on line, but buy it there too."

A key factor accounting for Ruralco's robustness in the face of changes is how it has managed to effectively integrate itself so well with its rural community.

"Ruralco has done very well in doing a deal with its shareholder-community base. That is that if they undertake to give it their loyalty, then Ruralco will guarantee them economic value and improved returns. That's the key to success with any co-operative, staying close to your shareholders and also reinforcing the role you play in their business, and their community."

Being relatively small has also meant the ability to continue communicating with shareholders, and having an intrinsic rather than distant relationship with them is easier to maintain.

Meantime the move to expand the Ruralco Card services has broken down any geographic barriers to expansion, without requiring significant investment in more "bricks and mortar" assets.

"This has opened up the options to do more things, and deliver a tangible connection between the shareholders and their co-operative. It is also scalable, for relatively small cost you can ramp it up and expand from there without having to invest in those bricks and mortar assets that themselves risk becoming redundant in the changing retail service environment."

Brent sees companies around the world increasing their focus on board quality to match executive teams, ensuring governance and management improve together.

"Being a director is not about just turning up for the lunch. However it can be a role where it is not always exactly clear what is expected of you. We are working on defining that role more clearly at Ruralco."

He sees some good examples across New Zealand's other retail sectors of how successful integration of service and technology have worked well. He can see opportunities where Ruralco's business units could provide a basis for future service and product offerings.

"Take banking for example. We have one of the most competitive, quality banking systems in the world which we tend to take for granted until we try using a system overseas."

"The customer is put very much at the front and centre and is the one getting the most value out of the structure – businesses that have their customers receiving the bulk of the benefit of the relationship are in a very good place, and I think Ruralco as a co-operative is one of those."



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Wheatgrowers tapped to enter competition



IMAGE: Michael Tayler, United Wheatgrowers Director

Arable farmers wanting to rate their wheat crop against the country's best still have time to enter the country's premium arable event, the United Wheatgrowers wheat competition.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGE BY GEORGE WALKER

As the 2018 harvest draws to a close, United Wheatgrowers Director and competition organiser Michael Tayler says now is the time to take stock of the harvest and give serious consideration to entering a competition that attracts the best growers in the country every year.

"Even if you don't necessarily have a top crop, the competition is a good opportunity to rub shoulders with the industry's best, and to learn more about what makes a crop of wheat great," he says.

The opportunity for rating this season's harvest is broadened by entrants being able

to enter the crop in one of four areas, feed, milling-gristing and milling-premium, and biscuit grades.

"We also have the protein trophy, that recognises the ability of a grower to deliver the maximum protein yield per hectare. It is a benchmark becoming quite important for the feed sector."

While Canterbury cropping farmers have dominated the competition in recent years, the opportunity is there for North Island grain growers to also enter and Tayler is hoping this year draws some northern entrants.

The competition is proving an excellent platform for grain growers all over New Zealand to demonstrate the exceptionally high standards this relatively small sector can achieve.

"We are identifying some really valuable niches within the sector that growers are proving very capable of working within."

He says the continuing support of sponsors committed to quality crop production has continued to play a major role in the competition's success, including Ruralco,

Allied Petroleum, Ballance Agri-Nutrients, Yara Crop Nutrition, FMG, Meridian Energy and Carrfields Grain and Seed sponsoring the 2018 competition.

He also acknowledged the support from major sponsor Ruralco Seed for the ongoing advice and services it provides to local farmers wanting to optimise their crop yields.

The efforts by United Wheatgrowers to promote the competition also fit well with aims by the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) to achieve their "20 by 2020" goal of 20t a hectare by the year 2020, pushing crop productivity gains underpinned by intensive research in crop type, sowing times and post planting treatment.

Tayler says while the numbers are still to come in on crop quality, early indications are yields are slightly back on last year, with early hot dry weather having some impact.

"But despite some heavy rain in early January, we managed to have a very good harvest run through to late January-early February and there would be well over three quarters of the total harvest almost done."

Ruralco Seed Sales Manager Craig Rodgers said it remains vital to showcase the skill and depth of the low-profile cropping sector.

"As a sector, the arable industry is performing well above its weight, and the growers in this competition do much to highlight the level of skill and passion they bring to the sector," he said.

"The reward for us is really about playing a part in showcasing the sector and the farmers within it."

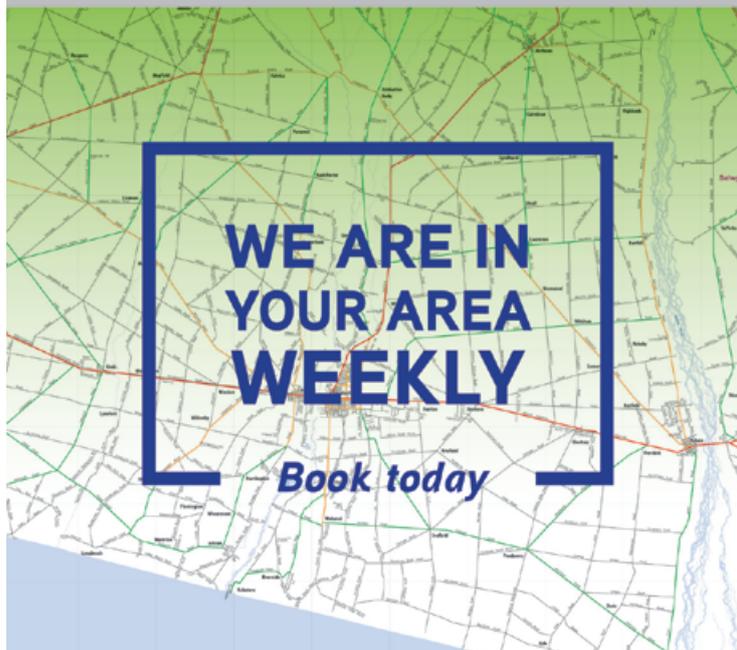
Tayler said farmers could expect a call any day from field reps asking if they may be keen to enter the competition. He was hopeful this year's entries would at least match the 103 entries received last year.

"I think the annual competition is doing its bit to help raise the profile of our industry.

"Arable farming can be very challenging at times and we don't have a lot of awards compared to some sectors, so it is good to have something that raises the profile of a very skilled sector, as much as it also recognises those world class farmers who do well within it."

To enter the 2018 competition, head along to www.ruralco.co.nz or www.uwg.co.nz and fill in the entry form and send in along with a sample of your wheat. Entries close 11 May, so enter today.

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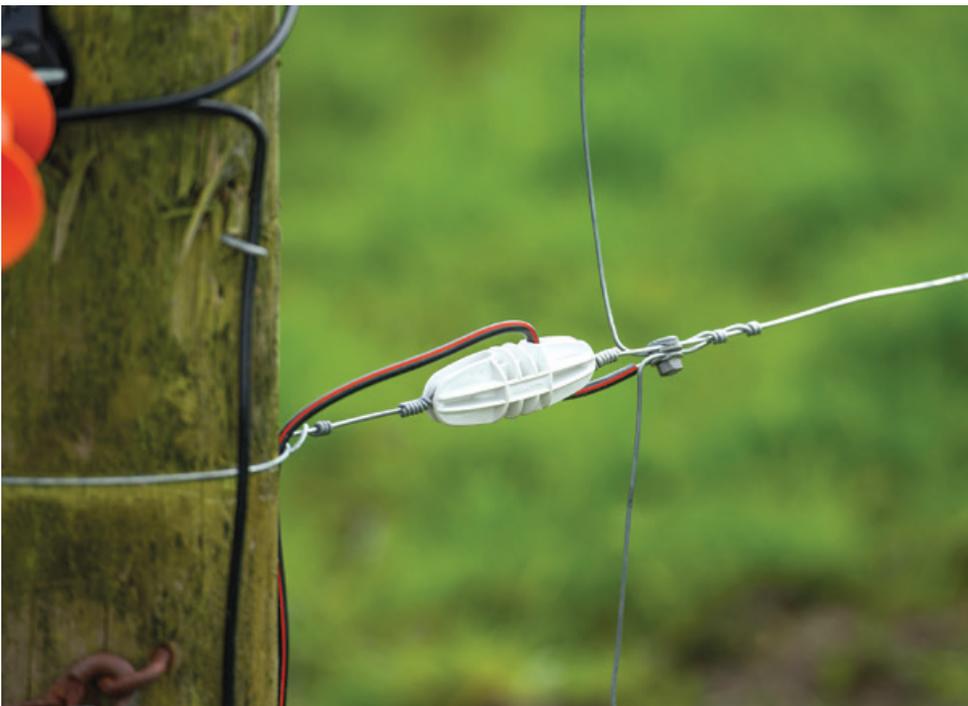
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Gallagher—80 years celebrating the spark



LEFT: Gallagher S200 Portable Solar Fence Energizer
BELOW: Extra High Voltage End Strain in situ



2018 marks a major year for Gallagher with its 80th Anniversary celebrations as well as several exciting new products released into the New Zealand market.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY GALLAGHER

"The theme for our celebrations this year is 'Sparking Possibilities' says Gallagher National Sales Manager Darrell Jones. We wouldn't

be here if it wasn't for the spark of the first electric fence that started 80 years ago. It's that culture of bright thinking that continues to deliver new possibilities to help make farmers lives easier."

The Gallagher-Ruralco partnership has spanned many years and Darrell believes Gallagher's new innovations in 2018 will assist Ruralco Shareholders to bring efficiencies to their farming operations.

"The latest product releases represent what Gallagher does best over all those

years, providing animal management solutions where Gallagher has established a strong reputation for high quality, relevant equipment".

The fencing technology leads off with additions to the Solar Energizer family and the introduction of the S200 and S400 units. Developed following the huge success of the smaller S10–S100 models, the two big brothers are perfect for heavy crop grazing.

The rugged units include an integrated battery and solar unit, with smart technology to keep the battery power at its optimum even over the darkest days. A rugged, high-quality casing and circuit protection ensures it can be relied upon in the roughest farming environment, day in day out.

Gallagher designers have also put a spotlight on some of the stalwarts of fencing components and developed superior solutions. This includes launching a new Extra High Voltage Strain Insulator, created to deal with the significantly increased voltages modern Energizers deliver.

The strain insulator is especially suited to places where the farmer does not want stray voltage, including electric fences close to dairy sheds and hay barns.

Released late last year the new Insulated Line Posts are gaining momentum in the market, highlighted by their flexibility and easy installation with a wide range of applications from fencing sheep, cattle, deer, and horses.

Farmers wanting to sharpen up their livestock management will also be able to put the company's award-winning TW weigh scales through their paces.

"We know they appreciate how we have combined a very user-friendly touch-screen interface with some really smart, time-saving technology that has eliminated any need to re-enter data at the end of your weigh run. The TW scales can even generate useful reports right there, in the field," says Darrell. And Gallagher hasn't finished releasing new products in 2018 just yet.

"We have several more surprises coming up but you'll have to wait a few more months to see what those are!"

Gallagher products are available from all Ruralco Farm Supplies Stores, so head into one today or call 0800 787 256.



A new strategic plan announced for New Zealand's forage industry

Five primary industry groups have come together to develop an integrated strategy for the New Zealand forage industry

WORDS BY NICK PYKE, FAR & CHAIR PASTORAL INDUSTRY FORAGE STRATEGY GROUP

The aim of the strategy is to ensure greater investment in forage research and development, and from that, a more financially and environmentally successful forage industry.

Forages are key to the success of New Zealand's \$20 billion pastoral industry, but until now, there has been no long-term, pan-sector research and development strategy for this vital area. The new 20-year Pastoral Industry Forage Strategy brings

together all key industry players including research organisations, plant breeders, and farmers with the aim of increasing the value of forage grown on New Zealand farms so that individual farmers are more profitable and sustainable.

The unified plan was developed and funded by Dairy NZ, Beef+Lamb New Zealand, the New Zealand Plant Breeding and Research Association (NZPBRA), the Foundation for Arable Research and the Fertiliser Association



in response to a lack of a framework for investing in the industry. All parties, from research organisations to plant breeders to farmers were consulted and the resulting plan, released early in 2018, enables all sectors to work together in a formal way for the benefit of the whole industry.

The plan is split into four themes:

- Working together
- Forage improvement
- On-farm innovation
- Ready and responsible.

Working together

Bringing together forage related consortiums, collaborations, and projects, in order to present a unified voice for the forage industry is very important. As it currently stands, multiple agencies are competing against each other for government funding in the sector, which results in lost

opportunities and market failure. Working together will enable the industry to bid for research work which clearly aligns with the overall long-term strategy. Opportunities abound from this work to set industry policy and direction, bring together investment, and to clarify messages from the industry.

Forage improvement

Traditionally, New Zealand forage improvement has focused on only a few key temperate plant species, most of which are only suitable for land that can be cultivated. These are ryegrasses, clovers, brassicas and maize for forage. There are real opportunities here to turn around lost potential and improve productivity with improved forages. The industry wants to broaden its scope to include a wider range of species, develop pastoral renewal practices for non-cultivable land, and work on improving

environmental outcomes. Currently pastoral renewal rates are a respectable 8% a year on dairy farms and 2.5% a year on sheep and beef farms. Other key areas for investment are identifying forage traits, making more genetic material available and doing more research on plant breeding and the symbiotic organisms which live with plants. Forage improvement work goes hand in hand with on-farm innovation; one cannot work without the other.

On farm innovation

The key to more profitable and sustainable farming in New Zealand is growing more pastoral forages on farm, and using this forage in a more cost-effective way. Turning forage innovations, such as genetic improvements and satellite imagery, into workable systems that New Zealand farmers can use is critical and requires developing and validating new and existing forage systems, and showing how they work on-farm with demonstration and extension projects.

Ready and responsible

New Zealand's forage sector must be ready for future market and environmental changes. The industry is committed to making sure environmental sustainability is at the heart of its work. As such, the new strategy will develop and promote responsible farm practices, and anticipate potential future constraints around issues such as intensification, cultivation and environmental footprints. It also addresses animal health and welfare concerns in new forage systems and will contribute to the creation of a comprehensive database of New Zealand pastoral soils.

What happens next?

A lot of work has gone into developing the new strategy, there's still a lot to be done in the next few months and well into the future.

The industry is pulling together several project teams to progress identified issues including forage value index development, biosecurity and innovative breeding techniques (including gene editing). Later this year the strategy will be presented to the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) with the aim of seeing it accepted as an investment framework for the forage industry, and we hope to be putting together joint industry bids for research funding within the next 12 months.

New Zealand's forage sector wants farmers to have a portfolio of techniques to ensure their use of improved pastoral species into the future and collaboration is the key to developing and distributing those new tools and techniques.

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We need water to grow food

For a country with a plentiful supply of water it seems wrong to say that we are progressively facing water shortages, but we are. It is essential that we engage now in planning based on science and logic, so that we can ensure food supply for New Zealand into the future. WORDS BY MIKE CHAPMAN, CEO OF HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND



LEFT: If fruit and vegetable growers cannot access a reliable and sustainable water supply, that could put our domestic food supply under pressure

In New Zealand, we have times when there is an abundance of water and then times when there is not enough water. According to NIWA, of the average of 550 billion cubic metres of rain each year, 80 percent flows out to sea (18 percent of rainfall evaporates, and around two percent is used for irrigation, urban and industrial use). The logical solution is to store water when it is plentiful for the times when it is scarce.

Aquifers are nature's way of storing water and there are projects running where the aquifer is re-charged when there is plenty of water available. But the more traditional way to store water is in dams and ponds.

Relying on water to fall from the sky simply isn't enough. We need to be more proactive in capturing and storing that water to ensure sustainability of supply during times of drought. In addition to supporting horticulture, dams also benefit streams and rivers by reducing flood risk and keeping flows up during dry periods, which protects aquatic life.

Providing water when it is dry also has enormous benefits for our rural communities and that, in turn, helps the financial viability of our urban communities. Without water, production stops and jobs are lost. In the November 2014 NZIER report to the Ministry for Primary Industries (Value of Irrigation in New Zealand), it was estimated that in 2011/12, irrigation contributed \$2.17 billion to net farm gate GDP. That figure is increasing every year and has been estimated by Irrigation NZ to increase to \$3.5 billion by 2021. NZIER believes that New Zealand's real GDP would be 2.4% lower (\$4.8 billion less) without irrigation and all households in New Zealand would earn lower wages.

So this is not just something that affects rural communities. It impacts all of New Zealand. We all need water to survive - humans, animals and plants. New Zealand's economic prosperity is linked to water being in plentiful supply all year around. Without sustainable water supplies we cannot feed New Zealand and grow the produce that drives our export returns.

If fruit and vegetable growers cannot access reliable and sustainable water supply, that could put our domestic food supply under pressure. No water means plants die and as a result, fresh fruit and vegetables are unavailable and prices go up because demand is higher than supply.

Last winter, spring and now the summer are prime examples of what may be coming our way in the future. A cold and wet winter that

hampered vegetable production was followed by a hot and very dry summer that saw many areas going into drought. Some fruit and vegetable growers had to make decisions about which plants and trees they may not be able to plant or harvest, and which may need to be left to die as scarce water supply was used to keep other plants alive. Replacing these plants is not simple, for some crops there are waiting lists of several years for trees, for example, cherries and avocados.

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FUEL

Giving it a blast

Full Blast Contracting has been a well-established business in Timaru for over 10 years, but new owner Keith Anderson is very committed to taking it to the next level and going the extra mile for customers. WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY FULLBLAST CONTRACTING



ABOVE: For Farmers, they provide exterior and shed wash-downs, as well as drainage and irrigator blockage services

MAIN IMAGE: The Equipment used by Full Blast Contracting is extremely high tech. This means the vehicle can work out on farm and in isolated areas.

A Timaru local Keith has been working in the water blasting industry for over 13 years and last year moved back to Timaru. When Full Blast came up for sale he took the plunge and decided to put his years of expertise into running his own business. Partner Michelle does the paperwork and along with fellow water blasting veteran Scott Miers the Full Blast team covers the area between Oamaru and Rakaia as well as the Mackenzie country. It's a small team and Keith believes this is key for customer satisfaction "the benefits of a smaller company is that you are dealing with the people who do the work themselves rather than the office sending people out.

We are a family business and if something doesn't go right it's our reputation on the line and we really want to be the best out there." Keith and Scott are always happy to quote on any job regardless of size and always like to do a site visit if possible "every job is different, so we always try to have a look first in order to meet customer expectations." The equipment used by Full Blast is extremely high tech—Keith and Scott have individual Harben units with the larger unit carrying over 5000 litres of water and capable of spending a full hour going at full capacity without any power connection. This means the vehicle can work out on farm and in isolated areas without needing a water supply.

Hardworking duo Keith and Scott have several areas of expertise for commercial, rural and residential clients. For factories and commercial sites, they offer a site maintenance service,

mowing lawns, spraying weeds and moss and doing rubbish rounds. They can also organise for other contractors to come on site for other non-maintenance related issues. For farmers they provide exterior and shed wash-downs as well as drainage and irrigator blockage services. Keith has recently purchased a high-pressure 120m drainage line in order to flush out often stubborn items that can cause major complications with both drains and irrigators. Full Blast Contracting promise a fast turnaround on jobs and are available 24/7 for clients if needed. They always allow extra time on both their schedules to attend to urgent jobs like blocked drains as having been in the industry so long Keith is aware that certain jobs can't wait. "In this line of work, I know sometimes we have to get up at 2am and both Scott and I are prepared to do it and at a reasonable cost—that's the nature of our work." They also are well aware of peak times for rural customers and are happy to carry out maintenance around these periods to accommodate for milking or other essential on farm work.

For residential customers Full Blast offers a full range of maintenance services such as washing, spraying, moss control and drainage unblocking. With winter fast approaching Keith

says there is no better time to prepare your home for the

upcoming cold season. "You need to plan ahead, and it definitely pays to have all your stormwater drains clean in preparation for winter and any potential flooding. Any areas of moss can also be cleaned up and treated. Otherwise when there is flooding and drains overflow there will be 20 customers all wanting to see me on the same day—it happens every year."

As well as always aiming for the highest standards of service Keith recognises the importance of value for money for the customer "while we have significant costs in order to maintain our high-quality equipment we do strive to be one of the cheapest around." He is always open to negotiation on price and will do his best to at least match a competitors written quote. While other companies charge mileage, Full Blast does not charge mileage within its standard area of cover—Oamaru to Rakaia plus the Mackenzie country. In addition, Ruralco customers will receive an additional discount of 7% on all services provided by the business. Keith encourages anyone requiring their services to get in touch and they won't be disappointed "I think we are definitely worth a call. Scott and I are the ones pricing the work and doing the work, you are dealing with the face of the company right until the end of the job and we always go the extra mile."



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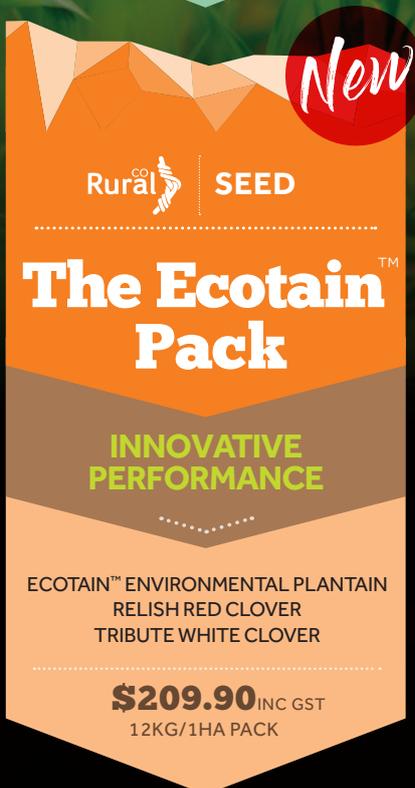
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User-friendly chemistry earns kudos on the coast

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FARM SUPPLIES



Keep things simple and focus on doing the basics well—that's the philosophy behind a long-running arable business on the mid Canterbury coast that's been in the same family for close to 100 years.

Harris Farm at Coldstream, owned by Graeme and Gillian Harris, totals 297ha under centre pivot and Roto-Rainer irrigation. The farm is virtually 100% cropped. Wheat and barley make up half to two thirds of the annual rotation, balanced by specialised seed crops like ryegrass, peas, borage, radish, red beet, spinach and pak-choy.

Twelve hectares right on the coast which does not suit cropping is sown in lucerne for baleage; the Harris' also finish up to 3,000 winter lambs every year.

Most of their wheat and barley is grown for feed, and is autumn sown in keeping with their relatively heavy clay-based soils. Wheat's back slightly this year, but yields usually average 12.6 tonnes/ha; autumn sown barley averages 10tonnes/ha.

Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus (BYDV) is a

constant challenge, requiring careful management to avoid yield loss. Graeme has used lambda-cyhalothrin insecticides for many years to control aphids, which are the main vectors of the disease, but noticed he was becoming sensitised to the chemical in liquid form.

"I'd only have to get a little splash on my clothes, especially on a warm day, and my skin would start tingling."

He mentioned this to Bill Cabout at Ruralco back in 2014, and Bill recommended what at that time was a brand new insecticide that used the same active ingredient to kill aphids but came in a very different form. It was a dry granule called Kaiso® 50WG that easily mixed with water, developed by Nufarm to be safer and more user-friendly than older liquid options.

Four years on, Kaiso is still the only formulation of its kind available to New Zealand growers, and it's also still the only lambda-cyhalothrin insecticide Graeme will use for BYDV control in his autumn sown cereals.

There are 'no problems whatsoever' with his skin sensitisation; it does the job in terms of aphid control in wheat and barley; there's

no splash, dust or flammability to worry about and Nufarm research has shown it is as persistent as the industry standard against aphids in winter-sown cereals. "It's just a far nicer product to use," Graeme says.

The Sorbie Technology in Kaiso 50WG means it looks like a wettable granule but once added to water, it behaves like an emulsifiable concentrate, mixing to a stable solution very quickly and providing both fast aphid knock down and repellent action.

Approved Handler (AH) status is not required for purchase or transport of Kaiso 50WG, nor does the product have to be tracked.

BYDV can be devastating for cereal yields in a bad season, with losses of up to 40% recorded.

Seed treatment protects young wheat and barley seedlings in early stages of establishment but once this wears off the plants are at risk of attack. Cereals are most susceptible to infection during the first 10 weeks after emergence.

Because very low numbers of aphids can cause widespread BYDV infection, it is essential to control aphid numbers before they become a problem. To find out more about this unique crop protection option, have a word with the team at Ruralco Farm Supplies.



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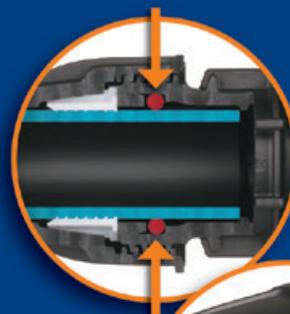
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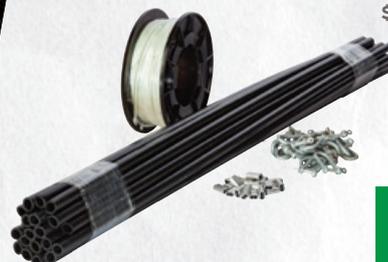
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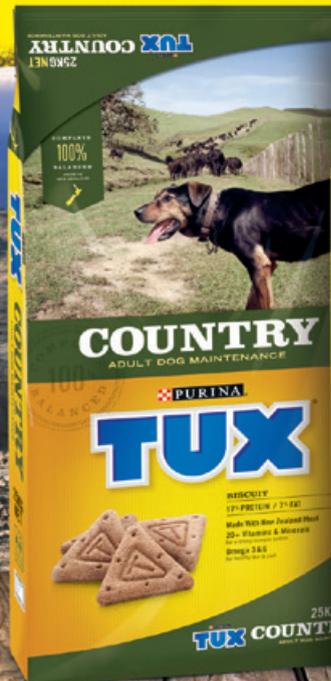
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Are your winter crops mineral deficient?

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Animal mineral demands change throughout the year—much like the nutritional offering that is available from the feed. In winter, when crops are a popular feed option, it pays to look at mineral availability with a view to optimise what the crop delivers.

A cow's nutritional requirements are largely driven by her primary physiological demands, such as milk production, pregnancy, weight gain or the like. These requirements have to be consolidated with what's available from the feed to provide a balanced diet; this is especially crucial over winter as it helps achieve targets while also setting up the animal for the following season.

"When it comes to winter crops, there's an additional aspect that needs to be considered," explains Natalie Hughes, SealesWinslow Science Extension Officer. "Cows that graze on crops or bulbs ingest a great deal of soil along with the crop."

"This is highly relevant for iron-rich soils," she says, "because iron is a so-called antagonist which interferes with the uptake of copper. And copper, among other things, is vital for foetal development." What's more, iron can also tie up other essential minerals that are necessary for daily functioning.

Specialists like Natalie will tell you that regular supplementation of chelated or organic copper is the best way of addressing this issue. This protected copper is an efficient and effective way of maintaining copper levels throughout the winter.

Mind you, other minerals need to be carefully assessed also. Iodine is a case in point because it is easily leached during wet winter weather and is typically low in fodder crops including rape, turnips and swedes. What's more, the animal's requirements for iodine increases precisely during that time. Keep in mind that iodine supports energy metabolism and liveweight gain while also being critical for reproduction and foetal development.

There's another matter that influences iodine levels: the lesser-known impact of increased goitrogen uptake through brassica crops. This substance has a bearing on the production of thyroid hormones and interferes with the iodine uptake through the thyroid gland. It's yet another reason why iodine may need to be supplemented.

Given the time of the year, there's also a big focus on magnesium – perhaps the most important mineral for dairy cows as it prevents a raft of metabolic issues. First off, it's vital for the mobilisation of calcium pre-calving. "Magnesium acts as a light switch for the activation of calcium," notes Natalie.

"It promotes the absorption of calcium from the diet and helps to mobilise it from the bones."

But it's also the first line of defence against milk fever – a major challenge faced by farmers. "Every incidence of milk fever increases the likelihood of other problems such as mastitis, ketosis and associated issues," explains Natalie. It also represents a substantial cost to the farmer with each clinical case translating into a farming loss of around \$1,500 (including lost milk production, reduced fertility and the increased likelihood of culling).

As far as magnesium is concerned, one of the key points is regularity of supplementation as it simply doesn't store well in the body. It therefore really needs to be supplemented on a daily basis which is why Natalie suggests mineral blocks as the easiest and most convenient option. She highly recommends SealesWinslow's Cattle Winter Crop Block as a cost-effective option that reliably delivers all the essential micro-nutrients that will help you fill the nutritional gaps during the cold and wet season. It may well be one of the most important nutritional investments you'll make all winter.

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3		21		39		57		75		93		111		129		147		165		183		201	
4		22		40		58		76		94		112		130		148		166		184		202	
5		23		41		59		77		95		113		131		149		167		185		203	
6		24		42		60		78		96		114		132		150		168		186		204	
7		25		43		61		79		97		115		133		151		169		187		205	
8		26		44		62		80		98		116		134		152		170		188		206	
9		27		45		63		81		99		117		135		153		171		189		207	
10		28		46		64		82		100		118		136		154		172		190		208	
11		29		47		65		83		101		119		137		155		173		191		209	
12		30		48		66		84		102		120		138		156		174		192		210	
13		31		49		67		85		103		121		139		157		175		193		211	
14		32		50		68		86		104		122		140		158		176		194		212	
15		33		51		69		87		105		123		141		159		177		195		213	
16		34		52		70		88		106		124		142		160		178		196		214	
17		35		53		71		89		107		125		143		161		179		197		215	
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218		285		352		419		486		553		620		687		754		825		865		936	
219		286		353		420		487		554		621		688		755		826		866		937	
220		287		354		421		488		555		622		689		756		827		867		938	
221		288		355		422		489		556		623		690		757		828		868		939	
222		289		356		423		490		557		624		691		758		829		869		940	
223		290		357		424		491		558		625		692		759		830		870		941	
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281		348		415		482		549		616		683		750		821		861		932		1000	
282		349		416		483		550		617		684		751		822		862		933			
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Many horse owners have a much-loved older horse amongst their 'equine family'—a horse that has served the rider or family well. Owners want to ensure these loyal equine companions which are in their twilight years are provided with a diet that maintains optimum digestive health and meets the very unique nutritional requirements of the old horse.

Often the past history of an old horse impacts on its senior years and how it ages both physically and physiologically - some old horses require more intensive feeding and management than others. Feeding a diet formulated for an older horse like Dunstan Old Horse takes into consideration the nutritional issues that can challenge the old horse.

Digestive function in the old horse can be reduced and therefore feeds formulated for the older horse will be higher in protein than a feed formulated for a mature working horse. In addition a reduced digestibility of phosphorus by the older horse results in a feed that is formulated with slightly altered Calcium: Phosphorus ratio and a reduced Calcium level than would be seen in a young growing horse

feed. The addition of a live yeast culture in the form of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* in Dunstan Old Horse serves to aid digestion of nutrients including Phosphorus.

Dunstan Old Horse is formulated with ingredients designed to be 'easier' on the horse's digestive system as well as having a lower starch and sugar level than grain-based performance feeds. Many older horses are more likely to be predisposed or suffer from laminitis, Cushings Syndrome or Equine Metabolic Syndrome than the younger horse. Therefore, when looking for an old horse feed it is appropriate to select a feed that is low-GI in nature to reduce the impact that diet may have on these conditions. The benefit of the addition of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* as well as aiding digestion is that it also helps to maintain an optimal hindgut pH to further assist in management of disorders resulting from hindgut disturbances.

Dunstan Old Horse utilises premium quality fibre sources including Lucerne and the super fibres, Sugarbeet and Soya Hulls. These ingredients result in a feed with a high fibre level which assists digestion and can also contribute to daily fibre requirements. The quality vitamin and mineral premix that is added to Dunstan Old Horse utilises glycinate organic minerals, resulting in improved bio-availability to the horse. Vitamin E is provided in its natural form—also for improved absorption. However there are two more additions to the Dunstan Old Horse formulation which will

benefit the general well-being and health of these loyal seniors including:

1. Elevated levels of Vitamin C, as synthesis of Vitamin C may be compromised.
2. A second live yeast, CitriStim®MOS which is added to help support the horse's immune system and boost the natural defences of the horse against health challenges.

With winter just around the corner, this time can be a challenge to maintain body condition on horses due to the colder and wetter climate, resulting in an increased energy contribution required from the diet. This, in conjunction with usually less pasture being available due to slower pasture growth and pasture being turned to mud, means that supplementary feed is important. Providing hay or haylage to make up a deficit in pasture is the first requirement, then hardfeed plays an important role in providing a concentrate calorie source to the diet.

For older horses, this time of year is more of a challenge as they need to be prepared prior to facing the depths of winter, with a suitable feeding regime which will help to avoid the harsh impact of winter conditions on these seniors.

Introducing Dunstan Old Horse to your older equine prior to winter will provide a premium quality feed designed to meet their unique nutritional requirements and also the additional calories to improve body condition and prepare them for a potentially long hard winter.

Dunstan Old Horse is now available from all Ruralco Farm Supplies Stores, so head in to store today.

WORDS BY: *Gretel Webber, Dunstan Nutrition Ltd Equine Nutritionist Assoc. Dip App.Sc., BBus, MSc Equine*

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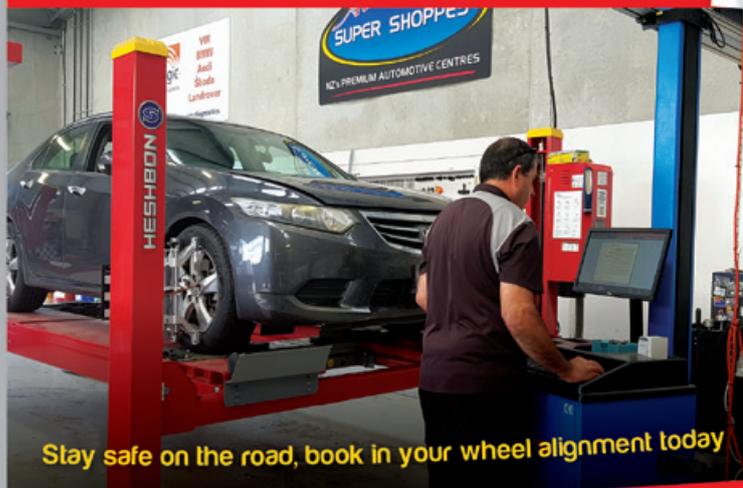
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Body Condition Scoring: Right cow, right time

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a simple process that rates the “fatness” of a cow on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is emaciated and 10 is obese.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DAIRYNZ

Assessment of a cow's body condition score provides a reasonably accurate measure of her energy reserves, and BCS targets at key stages of lactation have been identified to optimise production. These targets are based on research studies undertaken in New Zealand and internationally over the last 30 years.

BCS targets at mating

- The average decrease in BCS for the herd after calving is no more than 1
- No more than 15% of cows below BCS 4.0 and cows are gaining BCS

BCS targets at calving

MATURE COWS	HEIFERS AND RISING 3 YEAR OLDS
BCS of 5.0 with no more than 15% above or below this	BCS of 5.5 with no more than 15% above or below this

Condition scoring information contributes to key decisions on-farm, such as determining future feed requirements, determining which cows to dry-off, and reproductive performance (condition at mating or BCS lost post-calving).

Brenda Lynch of Dairy Condition Monitoring has been working as a Certified BCS Assessor in the Canterbury region for the past five years. With about 35 regular clients, Brenda is kept busy helping farmers give the right cows the right amount of feed at the right time to achieve their targets.

Brenda is also a member of the BCS Calibration Team, training, assessing and calibrating Certified BCS Assessors. She says condition scoring four times a year is good, but doing so even more frequently allows you to pick up BCS changes early, allowing more time to intervene and make changes to

feeding levels and herd management.

“This season, because of the dry weather, I have done more pre-Christmas scoring because farmers were worried about the dry. A lot of farmers hadn't realised how much of a tail end they had and an increase in the number of cows at BCS 4.0. So instead of seeing 40 to 50 percent below 4.5, there was 60 to 70 percent, which means more cows needing to gain 1.0 BCS before calving.

“So while the herd average may be 4, you have to look at individual cows' BCS and then also at their individual calving date to decide when to dry them off. The cows I scored in February were all just about to have their second or last scan so we could identify which ones were early calvers. Scoring cows in mid-February to mid-March determines if the management plan put in place pre-Christmas is working, and if adjustments need to be made.”

Friesian BCS 5.0



BACKBONE	Ridge easily visible but rounded and smooth.	
LONG RIB	Not visible but rounded to the touch.	
SHORT RIB	Rounded, individual ribs not visible but can be felt.	
HIP	Rounded. Curved in profile.	
PINS	Rounded.	
TAILHEAD	Tail rounded. Depression under tail filled. Even, no sharp edges.	
RUMP	Flat even cover.	
THIGH	Smooth and flat.	



THE FOUR KEY TIMES TO BCS:

Pre-calving, pre-mating, pre-Christmas, mid-February.

The most important time to body condition score cows is during summer and autumn. This allows individual cows to be managed to ensure BCS targets at calving are met.

While BCS is a valuable management tool, it must be applied correctly and consistently to be an effective on-farm measure. Training is required to enable accurate and consistent body condition scoring. Farmers can use a Certified BCS Assessor to score their herd with the confidence that their chosen assessor is consistently scoring to the NZ BCS system.

For more information visit www.dairynz.co.nz/bcsprogramme

Which strategies farmers use to manage BCS depends on pay out, cull prices, when they can get their cows to the works and what their production targets are and if they've made them. "There are a lot of moving parts. I can't just go out there and tell them to dry off all their cows now because they've got to make a living too. It's a big balancing act of this season with next season."

"It's about which cows need attention at what time of the year, and managing the system instead of changing it. Our discussion focuses on the data and how to manage their herd structure."

"If I find cows that are well below target condition, I identify them and discuss with the farmer an appropriate plan of action. If there are a large number of these cows, I go back every week and look at them in the paddock until we're satisfied that they're gaining condition. We can also contact DairyNZ and get advice from their animal welfare extension specialist via the Early Response Service (ERS) service."

Brenda goes back to clients in April or May, depending on calving dates, and how clients feel they're tracking for their dry off. She visits them again in late June or early July to see how they've tracked over winter. "It's too late in July to put condition on the cows for calving, but it helps with future planning and

to evaluate what could be done differently next autumn."

Brenda condition scores again 4–6 weeks prior to mating, or sometimes earlier. "Some cows may still be losing condition coming up to mating. Often these will be the late calving cows. It's hard to identify this if you're not condition scoring regularly. It's about looking at trends—are they going up or going down? Which cows are losing and why? Is it the ones we've been giving extra attention to, or ones in a larger herd that are still struggling?"

Brenda carries out body condition scoring during milking. She says attention to detail is a big part of being good at the work. "I stand alongside the cows and look at them and run my hands over the right side of the cow and enter the information into an iPad. You have about three to four seconds to do each cow. It's a very intense job. You are there for three or four hours doing the same thing over and over. You have to be accurate, make instant decisions, and have clear answers for farmers who may not agree with you. You can't moderate it afterwards. It's a skill to be consistent."

"Regular scoring is easy for a farmer to have done, and it can have a big impact on their entire farming business. It doesn't interfere with their day to day farming. The cows are being milked while I do the scoring. They can make the changes later."

"It's not just going out and giving a farmer a score. It's far more complex than that. There's quite a bit of problem solving in it. If there's a problem, is it a seasonal thing? Is everyone seeing a drop off or is it just happening on this farm? It's about getting the farmer on board and doing something about it."

"If farmers don't know their current situation, how can they plan for the next stage of the season? And every stage is important. BCS is a long term game. There are so many other factors to take into consideration. If a farmer has collected BCS data, they can look at all the factors. If you don't have data, you can't ask the right questions which are where are we? How did we get here? And how do we get back to where we want to be?"

For more information visit: www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/body-condition-scoring/ Or contact Brenda on 0273074040.

DairyNZ Early Response Service (0800 4324 7969) is a confidential support service aimed at helping farmers out in difficult situations which could put animal welfare at risk. These include feed deficits, systematic lameness or mastitis, animal care issues, and a lack of urgency to resolve animal management problems.

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ATS Director “walking the talk” on health and safety

Agriculture holds the dark claim of being the sector with an accident rate significantly higher than any other in the New Zealand economy, despite a relatively small portion of the economy being engaged within it. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE



IMAGE: Tony Coltman

Between them, machinery and farm vehicles account for almost half the farm fatalities suffered in the past decade, followed by livestock, and in 2015 21 farm workers were killed out of a total of 56 recorded in all sectors.

ATS Director Tony Coltman believes as health and safety regulations begin to bite, and more farmers also become aware of the tragic toll their sector has experienced from death and injury, things are starting to change.

Tony is Chair of the Ruralco Health and Safety Committee and says that has given him some insights to what a class leading H&S policy looks like, and the incentive to keep working on his own farm policies for Canlac Holdings where he is equity manager.

“Under the guidance of Peter Jacob, Ruralco has established itself as a benchmark company among H&S assessors, working really hard to have good systems and procedures that have made H&S part of its culture.”

The 2100 cow Canlac Holdings operation

near Dunsandel is also working hard towards building a stronger H&S culture within the large-scale business model.

Tony ensures H&S issues are discussed at every monthly staff meeting.

“We could work on lifting the frequency of those meetings, but if I look back a few years ago now, there are things you don’t even have to bring up with staff, their own perceptions of health and safety have also changed.”

A good example is wearing helmets on farm bikes, with most staff only needing to have it pointed out on the first day, then wearing one becomes simply part of the job.

Over winter a group meeting with staff covers some of the key operational aspects of the coming season, including specifying who will be in what roles over the intense calving period. Key risk areas are highlighted, including dealing with livestock when separating cows from calves, quad bike riding and care when busy around machinery.

Quad bikes have proven to be one of the most consistent causes of injuries and deaths on farm, and Tony aims to minimise their use, encourage staff to ride two wheelers, and keeps the machines well maintained.

Tony accepts that regardless of procedure, policy and practice accidents can still happen, and in themselves can be valuable learning experiences. Several years ago a staff member had an accident that injured their finger, but was classed as serious.

“We found that our procedures on the whole were good, but we had to put up more signage, and it now forms a reference point in discussion on H&S with new staff.”

Key points relating to H&S across the property are laid out for staff from the start of the season, particularly those identified as the most common accident catalysts.

“For example we get them to always move the travelling irrigator’s effluent hose to the side so they don’t hit it on their farm bike. It’s a simple thing, but it’s something most likely to cause a broken arm or collar bone if they hit it.”

“We also remind them regularly about livestock handling, about the risks of dealing with heifers being milked for the first time and about avoiding bringing bulls into the yard—we will cut them out of the milking mob in the paddock before getting onto the race or cowshed to reduce the risk of injury to human and animal.”

Tony and his wife Dana are also passionate about linking mental and physical health, encouraging staff to participate in regular runs over winter, or doing some circuit sessions with them in their small gym.

“We encourage them to get fit for farming over the busy spring period, they can handle the longer days better, and feel better in themselves too.”

Regardless of the H&S regulations already coming into play, Tony is optimistic about where agriculture is heading in this area and likens it to how farmers have adjusted to the lift in environmental standards in recent years.

“It used to be if you were hit with a penalty for environmental issues the council inevitably got blamed. Nowadays if a farmer gets hit, most of their colleagues will say it’s their own fault.”

“I think in terms of H&S we are only a couple of short years from reaching that same point.”

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Moly magic

Like many micronutrients (trace elements), Molybdenum can punch above its weight in terms of pasture quality.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



Molybdenum (moly), is an essential micronutrient for plant growth, especially for legumes such as clover and lucerne. "Moly is required by the Rhizobia bacteria that fix atmospheric nitrogen in legumes. The addition of moly to deficient pasture improves the efficiency of nitrogen fixation and increases nitrogen cycling, resulting in increased clover content and pasture growth," says Jim Risk, Nutrient Dynamics Specialist for Ballance Agri-Nutrients. "What's more it is easy and comparatively cheap to incorporate into autumn or spring maintenance fertiliser." Moly is helping many South Island farmers achieve significant improvements in the clover content of their pasture. The benefits

of clover in pasture are well known. Clover is more nutritious than grasses, has lower levels of structural carbohydrate, higher amounts of digestible protein and is processed quickly by the rumen.

"In many places moly has not been applied for many years, so clover can be very responsive when it is re-introduced," explains Jim. "On sheep and beef country, stories of it shifting moly-deficient farms from being store to finishing operations through increased clover growth are not fairy tales." Quality pasture with a good proportion of clover is equally valuable in a dairy context. Research undertaken on a Riversdale (Southland) site where both moly and

nitrogen herbage levels were low, demonstrated increases in clover yields by 25% and overall pasture production by 14% during the one and a half years of the trial.

Many farmers have been nervous about molybdenum after over-enthusiastic use in the 1950s resulted in a spate of moly-induced copper deficiencies. Today's application guidelines and products make this an unlikely possibility.

The biggest difficulty with micronutrients is ensuring application benefits your whole pasture. "You are usually applying micronutrients in small amounts across a large area, usually within a much larger volume of some other fertiliser product such as super," explains Jim. "This makes it very difficult to spread the micronutrient evenly so that every plant can access it and reap the benefits."

Ballance has developed and released a new molybdenum product to help address this issue. NutriMax Moly 1% has granules with a low concentration of moly. This allows for a more even spread (so more granules per area of pasture) while keeping the overall amount of moly applied within required specification. In pasture moly deficiencies can be overcome with an application of NutriMax Moly 1% at 2kg/ha every 4–5 years.

Identifying moly deficiency

The visual symptoms of moly deficiency are similar to those of nitrogen deficiency. Moly-deficient plants appear pale green to yellow in colour, stems are slim and leaves are small. In leguminous plants such as clover and lucerne, root nodules can be under-developed and often appear pale in colour, rather than a healthy pink. Nitrogen fixing bacteria require around ten times more moly than plants do, so moly deficiency will be seen in legumes first.

Herbage testing is necessary to confirm most micronutrient deficiencies. A clover-only sample is best for examining molybdenum and nitrogen levels to confirm a molybdenum deficiency (or any micronutrient deficiency you suspect is limiting clover growth).

A mixed pasture sample should be used wherever you want to see how much of a micronutrient animals are getting from pasture. For more advice on micronutrients and herbage testing, talk to your Ballance Nutrient Specialist or your Ruralco representative.

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Working smarter and safer with agricultural vehicles

As we get into the colder months and shorter day light hours we start to move our tractors and machinery often later in the day under the cloak of darkness—so this month it's a good time to have a reminder on what the requirements are for driving those tractors and oversize vehicles on the road.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS

What are the main things to remember?

Make sure you have the right licence for your vehicle type—important if you're buying a new tractor or vehicle. Many agricultural tractors can be driven on a Class 1 Licence but some do need a Class 2 licence.

Check your lighting requirements. While this will depend on your speed (under or over 30km), agricultural vehicles are usually large and slow-moving and can therefore present a potential hazard on the road. Having the correct lights enables you to bring attention to the vehicle. Operating an amber beacon warns other road users that your vehicle may present a potential hazard.

“Having the correct lights enables you to bring attention to the vehicle.”

Amber beacons are now mandatory on some vehicles. A tractor or machine first registered anywhere from 1/6/2013 must be fitted with an amber beacon that is clearly visible from the front and rear of the vehicle for at least 100m. If a trailer or implement obscures the beacon, then one or more beacons must be fitted to the trailer or implement to ensure that the required visibility is complied with. Many tractors and machines were originally fitted with additional permitted lamps, such as high beam headlamps, direction indicator lamps, front and rear position lamps, stop lamps and rear reflectors. It is highly recommended that such lamps remain fitted, or even be retro-fitted, and be maintained correctly.

“Make sure you understand the difference between day and night requirements for your size vehicle.”

Make sure you understand the difference between day and night requirements for your size vehicle.

Front mounted tines, forks, buckets, etc, are potentially dangerous if your vehicle is

involved in a frontal crash. Projections must be positioned to minimise the risk to other road users. Do an assessment based on the design of the vehicle, and the function and shape of the projecting parts. NZTA good practice states that vehicles with buckets, when travelling, need to keep the buckets as low as possible to maximise visibility for the driver and stability for the vehicle. If potentially dangerous forward-facing fittings should be removed if possible.

“Do an assessment based on the design of the vehicle, and the function and shape of the projecting parts.”

If your vehicle size exceeds any of the sizes of a standard-size vehicle, it is called 'over dimension' (OD). The maximum permissible dimensions for standard size vehicle are 2.55m wide and 4.3m in height.

While there are more requirements for an oversize vehicle—the most important thing is that you have the correct signage in place to notify other road users. Some imported implements and machinery don't have the right signage. Panels show the excess dimensions to other road users and are visible from the front and rear or to the side for front and rear overhang. They need to be positioned at the edge of the piece of machinery and must only be displayed when they are required. Do not leave them on the vehicle all the time.

“Some imported implements and machinery don't have the right signage.”

Hazard warning panels must be reflective with orange diagonal stripe. Red and white hazard panels must not be used. In some cases, an agricultural tractor with a width not exceeding 3.1m may instead be fitted with and use an amber beacon when operated on road.

You will also need to display an oversize sign.



ABOVE: If your vehicle size exceeds any of the sizes of a standard-size vehicle, it is called 'over dimension' (OD)
TOP: Over dimension vehicles must meet certain travel time restrictions

These must be black lettering on yellow-green background and may be in two parts: OVER and SIZE. Again, they must be visible to both the front and the rear and only be used when required. Do not leave them displayed on the vehicle when the vehicle does not require them.

Over dimension vehicles must meet certain travel time restrictions so that they do not cause unreasonable delay to other road users.

For all the information on Agricultural Vehicles on road you can visit NZTA and read the Agricultural Vehicles Guide or contact Compliance Partners on 021 942 150 to discuss all your vehicle on road questions—as well as occupational health, safety and drug testing needs. Think smart before you start.

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EXTRAS

- Hydraulic over-ride disc brakes
- Stock crates
- Jockey wheel
- Registration

TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

- 2440 X 1225mm ID
- 2440 x 1500mm ID
- 3070 x 1530mm ID

STANDARD FEATURES

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EXTRAS

- Hydraulic over-ride disc brakes
- Stock crates
- Jockey wheel
- Registration

TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

- 3600 x 1800mm ID
- 4200 x 2100mm ID
- 4800 x 2400mm ID

STANDARD FEATURES

- RHS fame and bolt on channel drawbar • New Trailcom 1500kg hubs and stubs
- New 14" 8 ply tyres • New 14" galvanised spoke wheels • 5 leaf 1000kg springs
- 15mm plywood floor • Trailcom coupling 1 7/8" std • Stop tail indicator lights incl. plug • Std 12 month warranty • WOF supplied • LED lights

EXTRAS

- Hydraulic over-ride disc brakes
- Stock crates
- Jockey wheel
- Registration

TANDEM MOTOR BIKE FARM TRAILER



FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

- 2400 x 1230mm (8x4)
- 2400 x 1500mm (8x5)

STANDARD FEATURES

- RHS fame and bolt on channel drawbar • New Trailcom 1500kg hubs and stubs
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Carrying on a family legacy



ABOVE: Perhaps one of Helmack Engineering's most iconic products is their truck decks

MAIN IMAGE: Chris Andrew, Dusty Hay, Paul Mullen, Jacob, Robbie Price, Barry Jones, David Grice, Lai Waqasokolala, Paul Cousins, Dave Shurrock,

Some of the many long-standing customers of Helmack Engineering may have noticed a fresh face in the workshop—new owner Paul Mullen has recently taken over the business from father Allan McCormick.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES BY BARBARA LOVELOCK & SUPPLIED BY HELMACK ENGINEERING

Established back in 1973 Helmack Engineering has been proudly serving Mid Canterbury for over 44 years. However while he may be a new owner, Paul is determined to stick to the simple principles upon which Allan built the business; personal service and superior quality products at a fair price. "All the team here take a lot of pride in their work, we want to get the job done in a timely manner and put out a great product that will stand the test of time," he explains. Naturally he has a few new ideas but for now Paul and the team at Helmack are busy keeping up with customer demand and Paul takes enormous pride in growing a family business. "It's been great to keep Helmack in the family, Allan's always been so passionate about it and I want to nurture the business and ultimately grow it".

Engineering is definitely in the family genes. Interestingly Paul was adopted out and raised on a sheep and beef farm in South Otago and Marlborough. He then reconnected with his biological family again in his twenties. At that stage both father and son had chosen careers in sheet metal and engineering. Paul is a qualified sheet metal engineer by trade and has a wide range of engineering experience. He spent time welding frigate componentry in Blenheim and then spent over 20 years at Air New Zealand working on aircrafts in their structures bay—so it's fair to say he knows his way around a workshop. "The workshop definitely keeps me busy and the day I stop learning I'll be dead!" Helmack offer a guarantee of workmanship on all products and in addition offer manufacturers warranties on materials.

Perhaps one of Helmack Engineering's most iconic products is their truck decks. Helmack decks are requested from Nelson to Invercargill and in their 44 years of operation they have manufactured almost 10000 decks. It's something both Allan and Paul are very proud of and obviously a testament to their quality of workmanship that people ordering new vehicles will insist on a Helmack manufactured deck.

Helmack is located on Dobson Street and their large workshop is impressive with dedicated areas and specialist staff working on various projects for clients in both the farming, equine and transport industries. They manufacture truck bodies and curtain siders for commercial trucks and as well as decks. Helmack makes trailers, truck toolboxes and has a long standing arrangement doing custom builds for the Snap On Tools franchise. For the agricultural customers they offer superior quality bale feeders, dog motels and horse and alpaca floats.

It also caters for equine industry producing top quality horse floats in various sizes. It's an area where Paul can guarantee he understands the needs of both his 2-legged and 4-legged clients. Along with wife Gloriann and daughter Courtney the family run Wembleybrook Stud Farm and meeting the demands of his equine clients is something Paul knows all about. Middle daughter

Michaela is currently studying 5th year medical school in Wellington and son, Stanley has just returned from a 4-year apprenticeship as a farrier in Kentucky, USA so it appears a third generation of the family is making a living through welding and metal craft.

Thanks to such a high degree of craftsmanship in Helmack products and a steady stream of customer orders Paul is also on the lookout for new staff. The workshop has 11 employees each competent in various disciplines of metalwork but Helmack are keen to hear from anyone interested in joining the business. If you are qualified in sheet metal/ engineering Helmack can offer a very competitive remuneration package, social club and a healthy work environment. "We do our best to try and promote the very best workplace atmosphere and if you are a team player Helmack is a great place to work and enhance your own skills." With a busy workshop and an ongoing search for new recruits it's certainly a busy time to take over the business but Paul is enjoying his new role and father Allan is still on hand for advice. He is also appreciative of the support he has received from the many longstanding and loyal Helmack customers and local businesses. "Everyone has been very supportive, Helmack has been looking after Mid Canterbury customers for 44 years and I hope to continue supporting the needs of our various clients throughout New Zealand." If you have something specific in mind the workshop is happy to quote on all custom builds, or check out the products listed on their website (www.helmack.co.nz)



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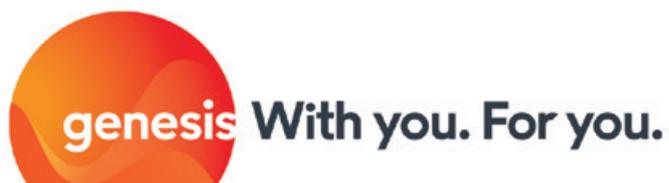
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Risks of greater moisture levels

Autumn can be a time when we see significant animal health issues. Footrot, pneumonia, nitrate poisoning and trace mineral deficiencies can all be significant.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY IAN HODGE, BVSC., MACVSC, VETENT RIVERSIDE

Footrot can become significant as soil/pasture moisture levels and warm temperatures are conducive for the transmission of footrot between animals.

Affected animals become very lame often with a swollen digit as well as the skin lesions between the two digits. It is important to examine the feet and interdigital space of every lame animal by picking up the foot, cleaning it thoroughly and having a very detailed examination of the entire foot.

Footrot is caused by bacteria called *Fusobacteria*. These bacteria act in association with other bacteria to break down the skin barriers and cause infection. The lesion smells very bad, the skin starts to lift and the area is extremely painful. The lesion can be treated with antibiotic spray when mild, but most cases will require antibiotic injections as prescribed by your veterinarian. Affected animals should be separated until the lesions are healed. Foot baths can be used when large numbers of animals are affected.

Pneumonia is also often more prevalent in the autumn as day and night temperatures can be quite different. These temperature differences can stress the respiratory tract

resulting in less effective clearance of inhaled material from the lungs, and compromised lung immunity. Affected animals cough intermittently especially when moved. In severe cases animals stand with their necks out straight so as to assist with the easy movement of air in and out of the lungs. There may be drooling of saliva as the animals breathe with their mouths open. Pneumonia in sheep can be treated, but in general sheep are managed by reducing the stocking rate, grazing pressure, risk of extreme cold and avoiding yarding. Many animals will recover with time, but those that don't, may die. Cattle can be treated with antibiotics. Pneumonia often doesn't respond well to treatment especially in the advanced stages when abscesses may have developed in the lungs. Unfortunately these animals may either die or require euthanasia. Chronic pneumonia can have a significant effect on animal growth during the autumn. The most important differential diagnosis for pneumonia is lungworm and this has to be considered. This adds importance to a good autumn preventive drench program.

Nitrate poisoning is possible at any stage but may be more of a risk in autumn when environmental conditions favour continued

uptake of nitrate from the warm soil. Risk factors include nitrogen overuse, warm cloudy conditions and plant stressors such as frost. Plants are the main source of the nitrates for animals which then convert nitrate to nitrite. In high enough levels the nitrite can affect how animals transport oxygen in the blood. Nitrate poisoning can result in sudden death of large numbers of animals. It is possible to treat affected animals in the early stages of the disease. Some crops are more dangerous than others. Green feed oats, brassicas, ryegrass, and some weeds are all high risk plants. Testing the crops before you feed them and discussing how to feed them with your vet is very important during autumn. Nitrate test kits are available. Please contact your vet practice.

Ensuring the trace element status of your stock is sufficient before winter is very important. Liver biopsies and blood testing done together gives the complete picture. Copper capsules are a good option for both elevating and maintaining copper levels over winter when copper can quickly become deficient. Cobalt, iodine and selenium are also critical components of appetite, rumen function, metabolism and immunity. Some brassica crops can have a huge negative effect on iodine levels over winter.

Dairy farmers should now be planning the dry off strategy. This should involve herd testing within 80 days of dry off so that the infection status of individual cows is known. With that information, cows can either be treated with long or short acting antibiotics or internal teat sealants. The higher proportion of cows treated with internal teat sealants must be accompanied by very good teat spraying long before dry off to ensure minimal numbers of bacteria are on teats and in the teat canal when the internal teat sealants are used.



Power market set for volatile prospects

South Island electricity users including rural irrigators in drier parts of the South Island like Canterbury, inland Otago and northern Southland should keep a wary eye on electricity prices over the coming year in what is proving to be a particularly volatile pricing market. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

Earlier this summer, the supply sources for hydro-electricity was split along geographical lines, reflecting rainfall variances into the country's main hydro lakes in each main island. Up until early February, inflows to all South Island hydro lakes had ranked the seventh driest on record, but more recent rainfall has helped lift controlled storage levels to about 86% of their maximum levels.

Energy Link's Hydro Watch Weekly, a weekly summary of hydro storage and inflows reports by mid-February the average South Island lake storage was sitting at about 2150GWh, The storage figure sat consistently below the historical average since October, getting progressively wider from December, but is now closer to the historical average of 2900GWh for mid-February.

Overall the country's aggregate hydro storage sits at about 80% of total, bringing it close to the historic average for this time of year.

While low rainfall in the southern inland catchments has been part of the reason for capacity below its historical levels, low snow fall over winter is also contributing.

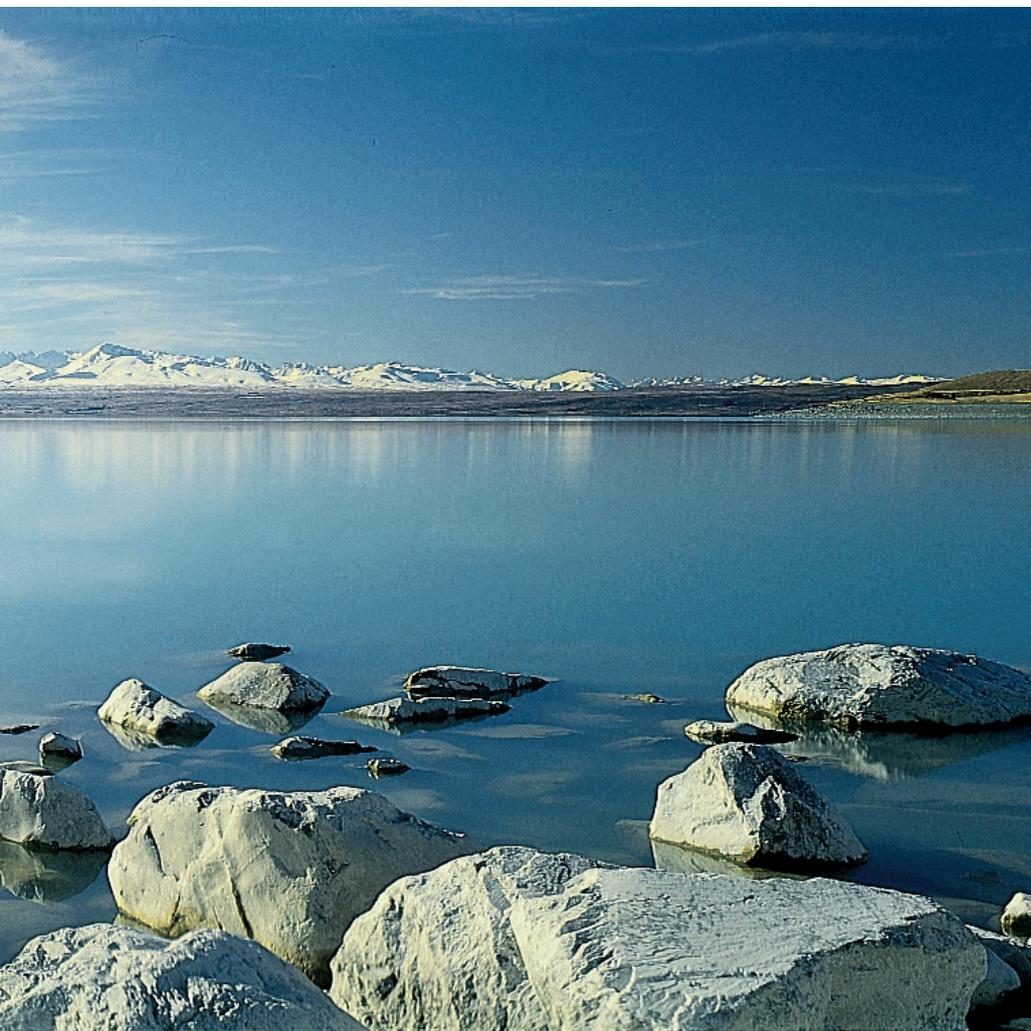
Spring and summer thaw into the Waitaki catchment contribute to about half the catchment's inflows over summer and is ultimately destined to melt for electricity generation.

Meridian's snow storage calculations report this volume to be at an all-time low, sitting on a deficit figure 403GWh of generation potential, compared to a time of year average of 295GWh, and well past the minimum recorded deficit of 117GWh.

Part of the cause has been some significant loss of ice and snow since last March in the Southern Alps, with the changes affecting river replenishment and flow rates.

“Part of the cause has been some significant loss of ice and snow since last March in the Southern Alps, with the changes affecting river replenishment and flow rates.”

Electricity analysts have taken some comfort from recent surges in North Island inflows which are now sitting close to the historical median, with Lake Taupo levels now reported at 134% of capacity.



Energy Link Managing Director Greg Sise cautions the risk to supply should the South Island lakes not fill further in coming weeks remains low, and analysis by Grid Manager Transpower continues to class the risk for any major hydro shortage as being very low. However the full effect of a supply imbalance between islands is already being reflected in wholesale electricity prices.

By early February average spot prices at electricity “reference nodes” in the two islands was sitting well above a year ago.

“The picture then is one of business as usual but the fundamentals of the market are all pointing to a tightening of supply.”

Analysis at the Benmore node had average prices sitting at \$105/MWh for February 4, an easing from the previous week’s high of \$143/MWh but still well up on only \$50/MWh a year ago.

While high, these prices are still lower than the painful \$200/MWh prices achieved during the 2008 drought year, and between months that figure peaked at \$350/MWh in June 2008.

But despite an improvement in the North Island supply situation particularly, electricity

futures price movements for early February indicate there is unlikely to be a significant easing in electricity prices in coming weeks. ASX Electricity futures price movements have prices only starting to ease below \$100/MWh by March, plateauing at about \$80/MWh in June, before falling again heading into net summer down to \$60/MWh.

“But at the moment things are the other way around, the futures prices are under-estimating actual spot prices as the supply market tightens.”

Greg Sise said Energy Link’s analysis has shown futures prices which are closed at the spot market price on expiry have typically over-shot spot prices.

“But at the moment things are the other way around, the futures prices are under-estimating actual spot prices as the supply market tightens.”

Should supply tighten in the future and there is a need for thermal generators to kick in with supply, prices will need to move up for those generators to activate the higher cost plants.

“The picture then is one of business as usual but the fundamentals of the market are all pointing to a tightening of supply.”

He also outlines some “big picture” aspects of New Zealand’s electricity market that add strength to the issues around tightening supply.

“The New Zealand electricity supply market lost 560MW of capacity in 2015 when two big plants were shut, at Otahuhu and Southdown, and that capacity has not been replaced.”

“Meantime many have said demand is not growing much, if at all, but the reality is we have had warmer winters with 2016 being the warmest on record, which disguises the growth we have had.”

“The New Zealand electricity supply market lost 560MW of capacity in 2015 when two big plants were shut, at Otahuhu and Southdown, and that capacity has not been replaced.”

He says it would only take a cold winter and low lake inflows as in 2008 to push power easily back up over the \$200/MWh mark again.

“For example last July we had a cold snap and demand spiked to the point every thermal station was going at full capacity to meet it.”

Meantime higher aluminium prices could prompt the Tiwai smelter to re-open its fourth pot line. That move would create a jump in demand equivalent to a year’s demand growth across the entire country.

Greg cautioned that electricity users who have not contracted on a fixed price could continue to face a bumpy ride in terms of pricing on the spot market in coming months depending upon what sort of winter the country experienced, and to what extent southern lake catchments in particular managed to refill.

“There is a very tight supply market out there that will be felt if conditions push towards a cold winter.”

Ruralco Energy Account Manager, Tracey Gordon urges farmers to give Ruralco a call to discuss their electricity contracts and options to ensure they can reduce their exposure to the more volatile pricing ahead, 0800 787 256.



IMAGE: Tracey Gordon, Ruralco Energy Account Manager

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01/06/2017	Mire 10 Mega	X-950907	\$330.28	\$25.93	\$304.35	\$7,254.74
	Mire 10 Mega	X-952802	\$236.70	\$23.67	\$213.03	\$7,467.77
	Irona Saddlery & Feed	00108603	\$66.68	\$7.55	\$59.13	\$7,526.90
	Tyre Services Ltd	644227	\$25.51	\$1.27	\$24.04	\$7,550.94
	Tr & Bistro Ashburton	2264817	\$1,348.60	\$67.43	\$1,281.17	\$8,832.11
	Wing Ltd	72150	\$528.91	\$52.89	\$476.02	\$9,308.13
	Law services	6954	\$344.07	\$41.01	\$303.06	\$9,611.19
		425957	\$814.49	\$69.86	\$744.63	\$10,355.82
			\$1,051.90	\$103.19	\$928.71	\$11,284.53
			\$12,976.52	\$1,691.99	\$11,284.53	

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Water Sustainability: Planning for the future

On our farm in South Canterbury we have just completed our first Audit of our Farm Environmental Plan.

WORDS BY NICKY HYSLOP, CHAIRWOMAN OF IRRIGATION NEW ZEALAND, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY IRRIGATION NEW ZEALAND



Our Farm Environmental Plan (FEP) is important not just as a planning tool but also for accountability. We are doing what we said we are doing and achieving Good Management Practice. This is where all farmers should be regardless of land use and is our commitment to improving water quality and minimising our environmental impact. Many irrigated properties now require a FEP and it's great that irrigators are using such a valuable tool.

The hot summer of 2018 has highlighted the importance of improving water quality. The first place our girls want to go on hot days is the local river or beach. We are making progress in some regions but we still have a long way to go.

As farmers we must accept that our practices have had an impact on the environment. I am sure I am not the only farmer that is frustrated that farming opportunities we were so excited about 10-15 years ago had such unintended consequences. Now we need to move on and address it.

Improving water quality is complex and catchment specific. The big impacts on water quality for irrigators are ensuring our water takes are leaving enough water in our rivers and efficient water use. Efficient water use is

about only applying what our plants require, minimising drainage and therefore nutrients being leached.

Land use has a huge impact on water quality and this is why the primary sector is working together through the Farming Leaders Group (FLG) involving all food and fibre industries. A work program around water quality is currently being developed. This is not about reinventing the huge amount of good work being done in all sectors but documenting these activities, so we can identify gaps, facilitate additional work streams where required and share progress or otherwise with all New Zealanders.

In mid-February this group had their second meeting with the Prime Minister and a number of Ministers to reaffirm the purpose of the group and discuss proposed outcomes. The government are very keen to work with us to achieve our common aspirations around water and land and were positive about the way forward. Leadership, water quality, climate change, biosecurity and a shared NZ brand or vision were hot topics.

The Minister for Agriculture, Damien O'Connor, has challenged the FLG with developing a Vision for Agriculture. This is a great opportunity. We are now working on

a draft to take back to all industry groups for endorsement before presenting it to the Minister. This will be the first time I can collect that all our food and fibre sectors have come together and agreed on a common vision and targets. Clearly this needs to be backed up by action which will only be achieved through all sectors taking ownership.

We want all New Zealanders to be proud of what farmers and growers do, to champion our food and to work with us to look after our natural resources. We have already seen significant investments in upgrading irrigation and farming systems but to achieve these outcomes farmers need to be prepared to embrace further change because our family livelihoods, our staff, surrounding communities and wider regions depend on us getting it right.



LEFT:
Nicky Hyslop,
Chairwoman
of Irrigation
New Zealand

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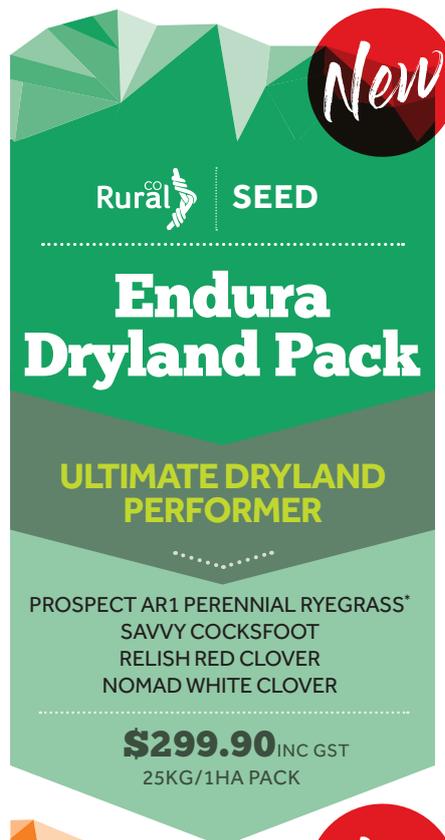
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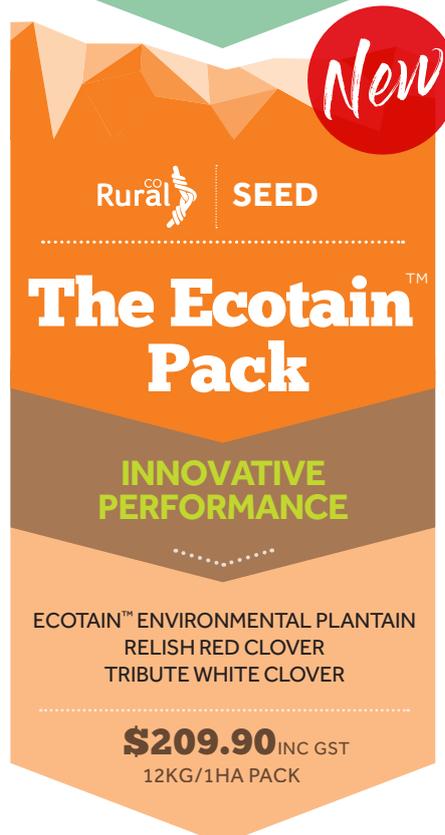
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Crops harvested in 2018 are eligible for entry in the following classes:

- FMG Premium Milling Wheat
- Ballance Agri-Nutrients & Yara Milling Gristing Wheat
- Allied Petroleum Feed Wheat
- Meridian Energy Biscuit Wheat
- Ruralco Seed Protein Feed Wheat (1st only)
- Ruralco Seed & UWG Wheat Grower of the year (1st only)

Each class has a 1st, 2nd and 3rd placing with judging taking place in May 2018 and awards ceremony taking place on 6 June 2018 in Timaru (venue to be finalised).

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

All entries must be received by Ruralco Seed no later than 11 May 2018 with an accurate completed entry form. One entry per class per farm. Each entry will be judged independent on the visual and tested quality for the particular end use of the wheat. The judge's decision will be final.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete the entry details below and send your entry form with test result and sample to:

United Wheat Growers Competition
ATTN George Walker
97 Burnett Street
Ashburton 7700

Untested samples can be tested by Ruralco Seed. If you require a sample bag or more entry forms, please contact George Walker on 027 3403 557 or george.walker@ruralco.co.nz

ENTRY DETAILS *please print clearly and fill in all spaces*

FIRST NAME:	SURNAME
TRADING NAME	
ADDRESS	
PHONE	MOBILE
EMAIL	

CATEGORY DETAILS

CLASS	<input type="checkbox"/> FMG Premium Milling Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/> Ballance Agri-Nutrients & Yara Milling Gristing Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/> Allied Petroleum Feed Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/> Meridian Energy Biscuit Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruralco Seed Protein Feed Wheat
VARIETY	TOTAL TONNES	PADDOCK SIZE (HA)	IRRIGATED <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

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