

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2017



From
Rakaia to
the World

Canterbury
dairying future in
capable hand

Wheat
competition sows
seeds of success
for industry

Ruralco Longbeach
Coastal Challenge
set to perform

Canterbury
dairying future in
capable hand

Ruralco Instore
Days 2017

From the Group CEO



Ruralco links thousands of farmers nationwide to their local businesses and it's a network which is continuing to grow.

Since its launch four years ago, Ruralco's reach across New Zealand has grown steadily to encompass much of the South Island and an ever-growing number of

locations in the North Island. But our connections to our home region of Mid Canterbury are still strong—and this is especially evident at this time of the year as we celebrate the success of another Instore Days and our connection to other events in this region.

Instore Days have been running for 23 years and attracts hundreds of farmers to our Ashburton site for a two-day event which showcases all things rural. In this issue of Real Farmer we talk to some of those who attended this year and to those who came away with the event's much coveted prizes.

Prize winners of a different sort also feature in another article closely linked to Ruralco. This year's winners of the United Wheatgrowers Competition (sponsored by Ruralco Seed) faced trying harvesting conditions, but still managed to deliver good quality crop. Their effort is testament to the skill and depth we have in our cropping sector and the competition is an opportunity to showcase our arable farmers and celebrate their success.

Another long-standing Mid Canterbury connection Ruralco has is as the main sponsor of the Longbeach Coastal Challenge which is gearing up for its 11th annual event in November. It's set to attract 1,400 runners, walkers and mountain bikers from all over the South Island to compete in this multi-sport event which raises thousands of dollars for its co-organisers – Longbeach School and the Hinds and District Lions. We talk to some of the competitors about what makes this event tick.

Staying with the Mid Canterbury theme, we also hear from two very different agricultural operators – Dutch company Bakker Bulbs which produces more than 20 million lily bulbs each year from their Rakaia base; and up and coming dairy farmer and former Young Farmer of the Year, Will Grayling. Will is the face of a new generation of dairy operators who are technically savvy and environmentally aware while Bakker Bulbs share with us their story of success and what that looks like in Mid Canterbury.

There's plenty more insightful reading in this Real Farmer, with a variety of rural sector information and commentaries relevant to all farmers so take a few minutes to have a cuppa and a quiet read.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "RSH".

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Real Farmer

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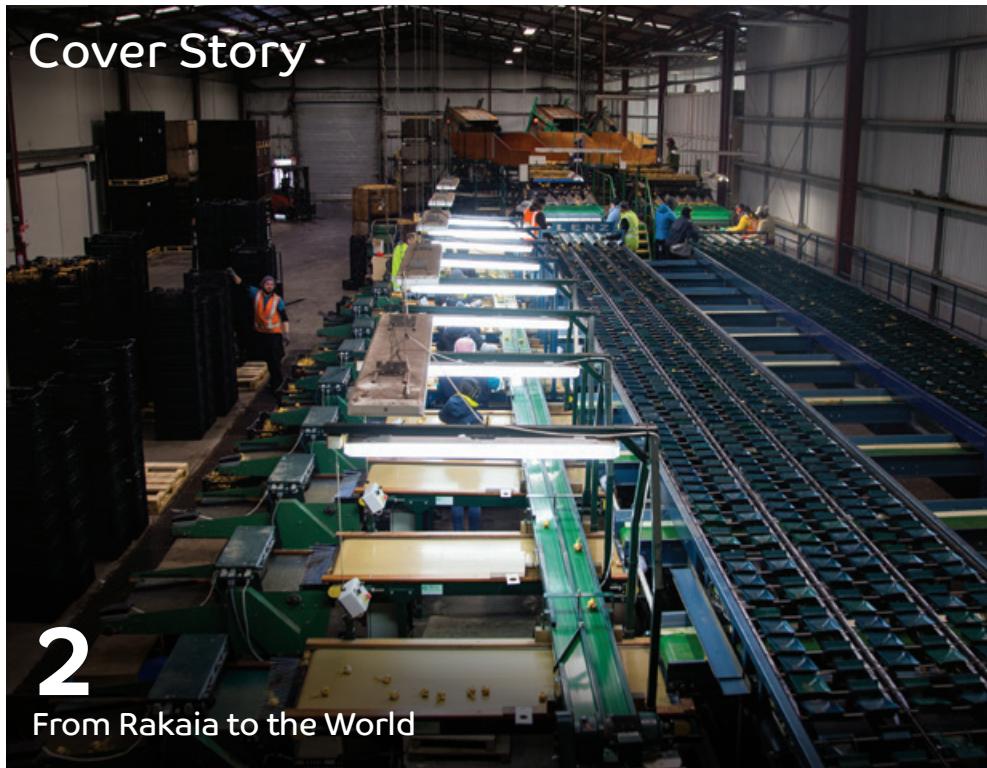
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ON THE COVER:
Adin Geeson, manager and part-owner of Bakker Bulbs





From Rakaia to the World

Celebrated for its agricultural diversity, there is much more to Mid Canterbury than the traditional dairying, cropping or sheep and beef. It's also home to one of the country's largest lily bulb producers, exporting millions of bulbs from its Rakaia processing plant to growers around the world.

WORDS & IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

A little over two decades ago, Dutch company Bakker Bulbs came to New Zealand in search of the perfect region from which to expand its operation, looking to produce quality Southern Hemisphere grown bulbs. Within five years, it had purchased 14 hectares at Rakaia, set about creating a world-class processing plant and planted its first plant stock from Holland.

Today, Bakker Bulbs is a multi-million dollar business, producing more than 20 million lily bulbs each year for large growers supplying the massive cut flower market right down to your average home gardener. It collectively farms almost 400 hectares with lilies rotated between wheat, barley and clover seed, and sells 150,000 cut flowers into the local market. In addition, it employs eight full-time staff with its workforce swelling to 65 people during peak harvest season, along with using contractors when required.

Back when Bakker Bulbs first came calling in 1995, Adin Geeson (manager and part-owner) admits he knew little about growing lilies. Back then, he was working as a tractor driver for a tulip grower in Tapanui who Bakker Bulbs approached about getting bulbs grown on contract. With a love of agriculture galvanised by years spent working as a child on his grandparent's sheep and beef farm in the school holidays, Adin eagerly took on the responsibility of caring for the lilies, spending eight weeks in Holland being brought up to speed.

Not long into the new venture however, it became clear that lilies were unsuited to west Otago's wet climate and heavy soils, and after two years of research, Bakker Bulbs moved the operation north to Rakaia because of its favourable soil conditions and stable climate with Adin at the helm. "The perfect season is a hot summer, coolish autumn and cold, dryish winter, so Mid Canterbury was perfect."

The operation started small, building a processing plant and cool stores, which have been added to over the years in line with growth. Now, it operates two processing plants, one for planting stock and the other solely for its export bulbs and has some 11 cool stores on that same 14 ha property.

Because lilies are grown on a minimum seven-year crop rotation initially they leased paddocks from individual farmers nearby, but in 2003 they managed to purchase a further 200 hectares and



also have a long-term lease on 170 hectares from neighbours, Edward and Bronwyn Oakley. "We used to lease just a paddock here and there, and then they asked whether or not we wanted to lease the whole thing. It works really well. Edward still helps out from time to time. We are also able to rent some fields from other neighbouring farmers too."

Bakker Bulbs grows mostly Oriental lilies as well as some Oriental Trumpet hybrids. They have around 30 different varieties with 65% of bulbs produced shipped directly to Asia, 25% back to Bakker Bulbs' parent company in Holland, and the rest to USA, Australia, Kenya, Indonesia and Mexico. Less than 1% stays in New Zealand, explains Adin.

About 75 hectares of what they farm at any one time is tied up with the lilies. Around 42 hectares are harvested each year, while the other 32 hectares or so stay in the ground for two years.

When the land is not in use for lilies, Adin puts in a variety of other traditional arable crops including wheat, barley and clover seed. "The main reason for sticking to the more traditional crops is because clover is good for the soil and the others have straw residue to put back into the soil. If we need a clean seed bed we might cut the straw and bale it, but most goes back in. We also grow black oats to be ploughed under. The soil has to be in top notch condition. Lilies are quite sensitive to compaction and fertiliser."

ABOVE: Adin Geeson, manager and part-owner of Bakker Bulbs inspecting the 2017 harvest
OPPOSITE: Bakker Bulbs operates two processing plants, one for planting stock and the other solely for exports

He also runs a beef finishing herd over the winter months, buying in mainly Angus and Hereford 18 month old cattle. "I just started doing it as a bit of an interest and it's grown from there," explains Adin. Originally they used to do about 30-40 head, now that's grown to around 120.

Predominantly the lily bulbs are planted during spring, with nearly 50% of the crop required to stay in the ground for two years until they're big enough for export. But if ground conditions allow, planting can start as early as June. "The best place for a bulb to be is in the ground. That's why you plant in winter if you can, but there's no point if it's too wet as it's bad for the soil. It's a little bit harder to organise work-wise because we are flat out processing. We would rather plant in August/September when everything is finished in the shed, but it's worth it because of the fact that you are getting a better quality bulb, which in turn means a better quality flower."

Planting is done using a specially designed automatic planter imported from Holland, with a set number planted per hectare depending on the size of the bulb. On average it can plant about 2ha a day depending on the bulb conditions. "The



ABOVE: Their busy season is winter with harvest in full swing from 1 June

BELOW TOP: The glasshouse in Holland is 1ha

BELOW BOTTOM: The bulbs go through four different washing machines to remove any soil before going into cool storage where they are air dried

preparation of the plant stock is really important to us," says Adin. "We are constantly checking during the autumn that they are growing to the correct size. If we plant big ones (bulbs) with small ones, we will have all different sizes throughout the growing season. We are always targeting a particular size, with each size planted separately. In each variety, the two bottom sizes stay in the ground for two years."

As the bulb's main growth period occurs during the summer around Christmas the flower buds are removed, so the plant devotes its energy back into the bulb, not into the flowers, says Adin. While 90% is achieved using a machine, what's missed (about 10%) has to be cut by hand. It's also peak time for irrigation. They have three wells over the two properties and use hard hose irrigators, as well as having 28 ha of solid set irrigation, which is although seen as very labour intensive but a good system for crops grown on beds.

The autumn used to be quiet on the farm, but in addition to the bulb production, they now sell cut flowers from February to April as an entirely separate business. "The main reason we started growing cut flowers was that allowed us to keep three people on full-time in the autumn otherwise we wouldn't be able to employ them during that period. It's also a good way of using the second quality bulbs. They still produce a perfect flower." On average they're selling upwards of 150,000 flowers into the local market. While some find their way to the local flower auction, 70% are sold to a local wholesaler who sells them into supermarkets, explains Adin.

Winter signals the start of busiest time of the year, with harvesting in full swing from June 1. In addition to its full-time staff, the staff numbers rise to 65 made up of locals, some of whom

return year after year, and seasonal workers and backpackers employed through AgStaff.

Once harvested, the bulbs go through four different washing machines to remove any soil before going into cool storage where they are air dried. They then go through an additional pressure wash to ensure every single particle of soil is removed from around the roots. Once they have been graded and counted, they are packed in Southland peat ready for export. The size and number of bulbs in each crate depends entirely on the customer; 75 per crate at the big end, while there can be as many as 400 at the smallest. The bulbs are then stored in cool stores and the temperature is lowered slowly to below freezing point to keep the bulbs in a dormant state. And then the cycle begins again.

Export regulations for lily bulbs are incredibly stringent, from constant testing of the bulbs and leaves during the growing season for any one of nine possible viruses through to random checks through the shed to ensure there's no soil on the roots. No bulb can leave New Zealand with more than 1% soil, but Adin says they aim for 0%. It's

the same with viruses. "We spray our crop on a regular basis to keep our plants virus free. That's a downside of the business, but we can't sell bulbs if a virus is found."

While others see the constant testing as a bit of a hassle, Adin sees it as a positive. "You end up having a great relationship with Assure Quality," he laughs. "We are used to it. In the long run it helps the New Zealand brand. We hear a lot of complaints about other countries, but our system works well. Being thorough and strict works in our favour in the end. Those that are importing from us know they can trust us. Any new varieties and new propagation material coming in from Holland has to go through the same stringent testing before it's allowed in."

Every bin they export has its own unique label, giving them 100% traceability. Two years ago they moved to a 'track and trace' live computer system where people can log on from anywhere in the world and see what's happening. "In the past we had been working with Excel spreadsheets. It has been a huge step forward; it's constantly updating itself making the tracking of orders much easier," says Adin.

But in reality, growing quality bulbs is only half the equation. While lily bulb production doesn't go through the huge 30% price fluctuations of grain, staying in tune with what their customers wants is a constant battle, he says.





Different markets like different colours. Japan, for example, likes light pinks and whites, whereas in Taiwan and Vietnam, yellow is popular, and it's forever changing. "To spread our risk, we are trying to supply all markets." Every year new varieties are being bred by specialist breeders, but in reality, few make it, he adds. "It has to be pretty special. If you breed a new variety and its looks like another variety, then it's pretty hard."

It's also a long process. Any new variety can take anywhere from five to seven years to get up to a commercial quantity and customers still have to want it in five to seven years, says Adin. "The planning is years ahead. We have a 1ha glasshouse in Holland preparing virus-free material for us. It's seven years before a flower grower can grow that material that's in the glasshouse now. You can't just get out of one (variety) overnight and into a new one either which makes it a reasonably stable business and the customers realise that too. You have to keep asking yourself: what do we want to be growing in 5 year's time? You do get it wrong with a few varieties, for sure. It's our greatest challenge."

He says the company's continued success rests on their relationships with the customers and exporters. Our customers are very loyal. Some have been with them since the start. In Japan, they've been dealing with the same families for the past 17 years and it's a very important relationship to have. "With our Japanese clients it's all about the relationships, but in other markets it's all about the price of the bulb."

"We don't even attempt to sell into countries direct. The main reason is because we would have to be selling into so many different countries. It's a complete business by itself. We have very strong relationships with the exporters, they have built the relationships with their customers and we have that relationship with them. We do go and visit our customers regularly with the exporters to show that united front."

Adin says future growth is limited by how much they can process through the shed during that

10-week period over harvest. The advent of new machines has helped, but to take it to the next level further expansion is on the cards this year. "When we started; 20 million bulbs was always the magic number in the back of our minds and now that we have reached that, we need to make some changes to increase it further. We have always chosen quality over quantity, and that has served us well over the years. We have no desire to be the biggest, but we have a strong desire to be the best."

For Adin though, it's always been more than just a job; it's a way of life and one that he really enjoys. While wife, Shirley, is not actively involved, she is always there and is 100% supportive, splitting her time between helping out where needed and looking after their three children. Adin would love



ABOVE: The planning is years ahead, you can't get a new variety overnight

ABOVE LEFT: Many of the staff have been with Bakker Bulbs for many years and contribute hugely to the success of the business

BELLOW: They harvest about 30 different varieties with 65% of the bulbs shipped straight to Asia

to see their children involved in the future, but says they need "to make their own way in the life". However, should they want to, the opportunities are there for the taking.

He also pays huge tribute to his staff, many of whom have been with them for many years and whom without, none of it would be possible. Bakker Bulbs is a big part of the Rakaia community, and each year donates 1000s of bulbs to the local Rakaia Lions Club for fundraising.



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Fodder beet vs ryegrass

Fodder beet is viewed by many farmers as a game-changer, especially for those seeking feed options other than pasture to meet shortages over winter, increase stocking rates and improve animal productivity. WORDS SUPPLIED BY DR KIRSTY HAMMOND, SENIOR SCIENTIST, AGRESEARCH



Fodder beet has been shown to provide a high dry matter yield, have a high energy content, potentially a low cost per unit of feed compared to other supplements, and potential environmental benefits due to it being a feed low in dietary crude protein (i.e. nitrogen).

Although live weight gain responses in finishing beef cattle fed fodder beet have been studied, less is known about how suitable fodder beet is to support good performance of the dam and offspring when fed to pregnant animals. Pregnant animals are of particular concern because of the high demands for energy and protein to meet both dam and fetal nutrient requirements in mid-late pregnancy. This is particularly important for sheep given the high proportion of multiple-bearing ewes.

The questions that remain are whether we should be feeding fodder beet to pregnant animals, is it a feed with adequate nutritional value, and what impact can it have on both dam and offspring survival and performance?

Our predictions were that compared to ryegrass-dominant pasture, ewes fed a high energy diet such as fodder beet in mid-to-late pregnancy would have improved live weight and body condition score, but as fodder beet is low in dietary crude protein, lambs born to ewes fed fodder beet could have an increased risk of mortality, lower birth weight and poor growth after birth.

Working with Beef + Lamb New Zealand, researchers in the Animal Nutrition and Physiology Team at AgResearch set out to identify

the consequences of feeding fodder beet to mid-to-late pregnancy ewes on the survival and performance of ewes and their offspring.

In our study, we took 200 twin-bearing ewes and assigned them to either fodder beet (*Rivage*) or ryegrass-dominant pasture diets from about day 80 of pregnancy through to lambing, with ryegrass/clover hay freely available in racks. At the start of lambing, ewes fed fodder beet were moved back to ryegrass-dominant pasture and managed alongside the ryegrass-fed ewes.

The ewes were moved onto their feeds according to good practice, and were provided standard animal health treatments, such as mineral supplements and vaccines. Both ewe and lamb performance was monitored until weaning in early December.

What we found was that ewes fed fodder beet consumed a considerable amount of hay, needed to be treated for iodine deficiency, and had a lower live weight and lower body condition score leading up to lambing, compared to their ryegrass-fed counterparts. We also found that lambs born to ewes fed fodder beet had a reduced survival from pregnancy scanning to weaning, with overall lamb losses of 34%, compared to 15% of lambs born to ewes fed ryegrass pasture. Lambs born to fodder-beet fed ewes also had a lower weight and smaller body size at birth, and poorer growth rates up to weaning, compared to lambs from ewes fed pasture.

The results suggest that despite the high energy in the diet, the value of fodder beet as a feed for pregnant ewes can be improved by paying attention to protein and mineral supply (e.g. iodine). It is also important to not forget that fodder beet provides a winter feed option in times when pasture is hard to come by. So, we need to find solutions for farmers and their livestock to get the most out of fodder beet as a winter feed option.

For AgResearch, the next steps are to better understand the full nutritional spectrum from fodder beet, beyond just energy, to ensure that feeding practices are developed to extract the most value from this crop. Also, we want to explore if the findings from this study translate to other bulb crops such as swedes.

Our advice to farmers from the research so far is to be careful when using fodder beet as a sole feed source. Our research studied the effects of feeding fodder beet in mid-to-late pregnancy, when unborn lambs grow the fastest. The suitability of this crop may be better if fed earlier during the ewe gestation, but further work to figure that out is still to be done.



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Wheat competition sows seeds of success for industry



Despite some tough harvesting conditions, this year's United Wheatgrowers competition proved to be another success for showcasing Canterbury's highly skilled arable industry.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

United Wheatgrowers Director and competition organiser Michael Tayler said the wet conditions over harvest in the South Canterbury district in particular had made things more challenging for this year's entrants.

"That tough finish meant we were probably down about 10–15 entries on last year, but despite that in general the crop quality remained very good overall this year."

All this year's winners were from Canterbury and, with the exception of one, were cardholders of major sponsor Ruralco.

The Ashburton based farmer co-operative has continued to invest significant time and funds into sponsoring a competition, including publicising the event, selecting judges and helping farmers get their entries submitted.

Ruralco Seed Sales Manager Craig Rodgers said the competition 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. I think the sector ideally needs even more of these competitions to raise its profile further," he said.

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

Michael says the continued support and assistance from Ruralco was greatly appreciated.

"Without the help of industry sponsors these events would be much more difficult to have."

Sponsorship for the event also comes from FMG and Carrfields Grain providing sponsor prizes and catering, alongside Orion AgriScience.

Canterbury farmers have dominated the competition in the past and this year was no exception.

Michael says the competition is proving an excellent platform for New Zealand grain farmers to demonstrate the exceptionally high standards their relatively small sector can achieve.

"We are identifying some really valuable niches within the sector that growers are proving very capable of working within." Splitting the competition into the five categories has meant growers can get a clear steer on where they are best to enter, based off their skills, their crop and their land type.

Judging criteria includes moisture, weight, size and milling class, along with a standing crop's colour and appearance.

While open to entrant across the whole country, Canterbury continues to dominate the competition, and Michael is hopeful some neighbours from the north may consider entering this year to promote a bit of inter-island competitiveness within the competition.

"Really this is as much a celebration for the industry as it is a competition. It's a chance to recognise that while we may be a small industry we are one that is highly skilled and full of committed, passionate growers producing grains that really are up among the best in the world."

Michael says it is still too early to predict how big the competition will be for next year. However, he suspects there will be more spring sown wheat going in the ground this year, due a wetter than average autumn making sowing impossible for some farmers.



ABOVE: Bill Davey with Michael Tayler United Wheat Growers

BELOW: Andrew West with Craig Rodgers Ruralco Seed

"As a result we may find the yields will be back a bit which is usually the case with spring sown wheat."



United Wheatgrowers section



Bill Davey & his son Nick hold the trophy with pride

Bill Davey

Winner Milling-Gristing section

SPRINGDALE FARMING COMPANY, RAKAIA

Sticking to a successful rotation and paying attention to the details has meant Rakaia farmer Bill Davey of the Springdale Farming Company has claimed the milling wheat award for the third consecutive year.

"We have always stuck with the same rotation, sowing the wheat after process potatoes have been lifted. I think it has a bit to do with a good level of fertility remaining after the potatoes come out," he says.

The yield of the Discovery variety he sowed proved to be close to that expected from a feed wheat, returning 12t a hectare, but also delivering a particularly high level of protein at 13.2%. The award-winning crop was grown in a 23ha paddock.

"It all goes to the Champion Flour mills on contract and they are particularly keen to take it, given that combination of high spec test results and protein levels."

For the past three years Bill has had the same agronomist, and believes that, in combination with detailed soil testing and good fertility advice from Ballance has helped keep the quality and quantity formula ticking over.

"We were also able to take advantage of having a big combine that can mop up grain very quickly, so we managed to harvest it all nice and dry, avoiding the rain."

Bill has plans for growing more Discovery next year. "It fits into our rotation very well, and delivers every year."



Dave Redmond

Premium Milling section

D AND L REDMOND LTD, PENDARVES ASHBURTON

Dave Redmond, winner of the Premium Milling category in this year's awards is proving his consistency in growing a high standard of milling wheat over time, claiming the award for the third time in six years.

This year's award was picked up growing his tried and proven variety "Duchess", supplied through Luisetti Seeds. Dave attributes his long relationship with Ed Luisetti for helping with the win, thanks to Ed's on going agronomic advice and knowledge.

"It helps when it comes to getting our timing right, and working with Ed it is basically a partnership, helped by having very good seed too of course."

The wheat is usually planted after potatoes have been lifted, and Dave attributes the spuds for leaving a good level of fertility in their wake to boost the wheat's performance.

The 40ha of irrigated crop yielded 12.5-13t a hectare this year selling on contract to Western Champion milling for high grade milling flour. Dave is particularly proud that Mid Canterbury growers have performed so well in this year's competition, with all the winners spread in a relatively tight circle around Ashburton, Leeston and Rakaia.

He is also highly positive about the prospects for Canterbury arable farmers, given the quality and results yielded in the grain growing competition by entrants.

"We are now competing closely with Australian wheat with the level of quality we are getting, and with irrigation we are also getting the yields up there that the Aussies may struggle more to achieve."

winners 2017 harvest



Andrew West Winner Biscuit section

WEST FARMS LTD, ASHBURTON

For the second time Andrew West and West Farms picked up the top award for producing high quality biscuit wheat, having won it two years earlier.

Andrew says as a crop, biscuit wheat can be a challenge to grow depending upon seasons to hit the right protein specs, given the requirement is for it to be a low protein (10% or less) wheat while also pushing for big yields. He achieved that with the Monterey variety and says that variety suits them well, with its high yield potential.

Andrew supplies biscuit wheat to the major flour mills and admits he was a little surprised to pick up the award this year, but was pleased and grateful to be this season's winner.

"The balancing act is always with trying to get the most yield and producing the quality the mills require," he says.

As with other milling wheat, biscuit wheat can be susceptible to green sprouting giving a low falling number and the 2017 harvest posed that challenge over a wet January.

"Overall we were pretty happy with our harvest. We managed to get all our autumn sown crops in, albeit a little later than we would have liked given the wet conditions, so we will see how this year's looks and hopefully be able to enter a good crop again."

The farming operation spans a wide spectrum of crops, including high value radish and carrot seed, red and white clover seed, potatoes, ryegrass, barley and wheat over 900ha.

Andrew admits enjoying the challenge such a broad range of crops offer, particularly not knowing what each season may bring with it.

"That is really what keeps things interesting for us, and you have to be prepared to adapt and think about how you are going to deal with things as they arise."



David Millar Winner Protein section

CULNADY FARM, ASHBURTON

The team at Culnady Farm Ashburton were quietly chuffed to pick up the inaugural award for the best yielding protein wheat crop in this year's competition, and Dave Millar of Culnady Farm admits he is not usually the sort of farmer who enters competitions.

"But we saw this crop coming off the header, with very good grain size and our friendly Carrfields Grain & Seed rep entered the sample on our behalf."

The variety was part of a trial crop sown for the first time and the small three-hectare planting yielded over 33 tonne with plump heavy grain, despite having a challenging time from bird damage. It was grown on a light stony soil, where the rest of the farm is a mix of heavy and lighter soils.

"Because it was an early maturing variety and the paddock was surrounded by trees, the damage was such I almost thought we were going to have to put the cows through it, so this was a nice turnaround for us with it."

He jokingly told the Carrfields staff he worked with that if he won an award with the new variety they would have to name it "Hughie" after his father Hugh who has driven the combine on the Culnady farm for the past 60 years. "They may have to take me up on that now!"

David said the crop did not receive any special treatment and was treated the same as any other he has sown. He is now thinking about the potential it may have grown in other paddocks, and is impressed with its robustness, handling the lighter stony soil on his property well.

"And because it was a new seed variety we did not have a lot of seed to sow, so the rate was a bit lighter at 55kg a hectare, sown on April 22nd."

Culnady farm is a 400ha mixed cropping and dairy support farm, and has been in the Millar family for over 100 years.

"The team at Culnady Farm rely on expert help and advice from all their friendly seed company reps, in return the reps always get a cuppa and cake, this has worked well for Culnady Farm for years, and long may it last!"

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Ideally pasture should contain about 30% clover, which would fix roughly 200 kg N/ha/yr. However, clover is not as good at foraging for nutrients as other pasture plants, meaning it can easily be affected if nutrients are in short supply.

Potassium trends in New Zealand soils

The law of the minimum applies to clover as to any other plant. Growth is limited by the nutrient in shortest supply. The key is determining which one that is. Many are aware that sulphur is important for growth yet it is also commonly deficient. However, for many years, potassium has been somewhat overlooked. It was believed that New Zealand's sedimentary soils contain lots of reserve K, which is slowly released over time. It is now understood that this does not happen fast enough to avoid mining potassium supplies in our farming systems.

A study of fertility trends in New Zealand pastoral soils examined soil test information from dairy and sheep and beef farms over a seven-year period. Results indicated that nearly 35% of farms had potassium levels that were below optimum for maximum production (i.e. less than Quick Test K 7–10 on ash or pumice soils, 5–8 on sedimentary soils). Around 8% had very low potassium levels. These findings were confirmed by analysis of clover tissue samples. On-farm observations also showed poor-performing young pastures, weak ryegrass and little clover.

Managing your potassium levels

Keeping potassium levels in good form will improve the clover content of pasture and increase overall pasture production.

Potassium can leach, so on some soils, particularly those with low cation exchange capacity (CEC)

and/or under high rainfall (over 1500 mm/year) it may not be practical or economic to keep potassium levels within the optimum range. However, supplying enough potassium to meet plant needs is necessary to stop soil levels going into decline. Split applications are recommended in high-loss situations.

Signs of deficiency

Potassium-deficient clovers are typically speckled, yellowed or 'scorched' around the leaf margins, with symptoms showing on older leaves first. Clover growth may be patchy – with clover looking lusher in old, potassium-rich urine spots. Herbage testing can confirm a visual diagnosis. Herbage testing complements soil testing to give a more precise picture of your farm's nutrient levels, including levels of trace elements that are important for animal health.

Clover will show nutrient deficiencies before grass, so a clover-only herbage test is a useful tool to fine-tune your fertiliser programme. Samples are taken from plants in the poorest growing pasture, during spring when climate isn't limiting growth.

Timing is everything

Plants will take up more potassium than they need to grow. Of the 'big four' nutrients required for growth – nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and sulphur – potassium is the only positively charged ion. Consequently, plants take up extra potassium to help maintain the plant's electrical balance. This is called 'luxury uptake' and it has a number of implications:

- Hay and silage remove large amounts of potassium – 20 kg K/tonne DM or more, especially if luxury uptake occurs. Replacing potassium after harvest is therefore a better strategy than applying it beforehand;
- Excess potassium can reduce the uptake of magnesium (Mg) and calcium (Ca) by plants and animals, leading to metabolic disorders such as milk fever (hypocalcemia) and grass staggers (hypomagnesaemia);
- Use herbage testing to measure potassium and magnesium levels in your pasture and assess your risk;
- Avoid applying potassium to pasture two months prior to calving or lambing;
- Provide animals with a magnesium supplement programme; this could include dusting pasture with magnesium, adding magnesium to the water supply using a Dosatron, including it in supplementary feed or using mineralised molasses blocks.

For more advice on nutrient needs talk to your Ballance Nutrient Specialist or the Ruralco Seed team on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).



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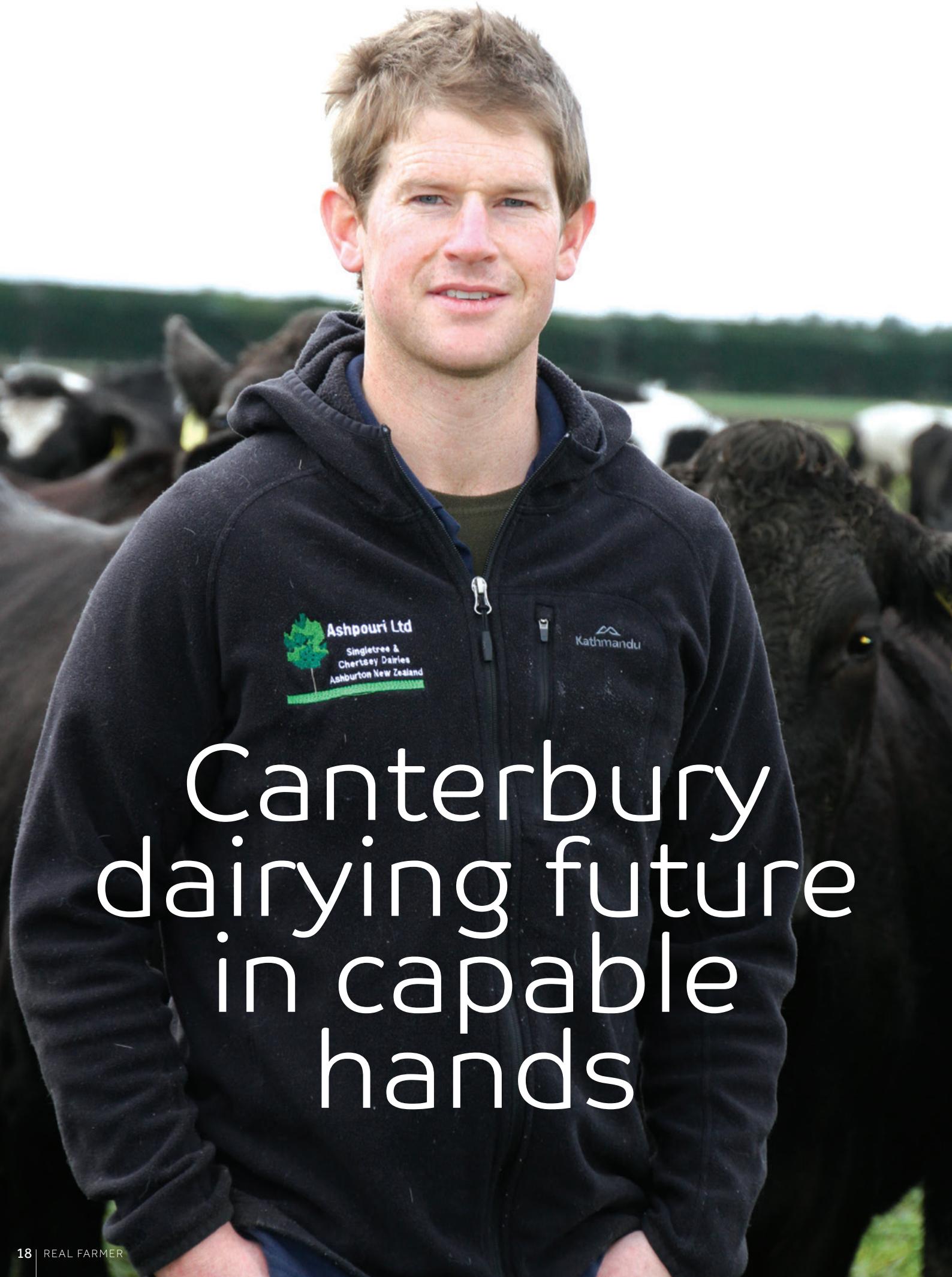
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Canterbury
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Young Canterbury dairy farmer Will Grayling is the face of a new generation of dairy operators charging up through the industry. Tapped into new technology, environmentally aware and with a good team around him, he is setting new standards and goals for dairying in Canterbury today.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

While barely in his 30s, Will has set and achieved some aspirational goals both within his farm business, and for where he wanted to be after winning the 2011 Young Farmer competition.

He has done so acknowledging the support and insights gained from people who have proven to be standard setters themselves in the same industry.

Will wears two dairying hats with his investment in the dairy sector, as a sharemilker and as an equity partner, and has found they are a good balance for taking the ups with the downs in an industry that has seen the extremes of both in only three short years. While originally from the Waikato, he was drawn to Canterbury to study for four years in agricultural science, finishing with a Masters in Agricultural Science before kicking off as a graduate with Farmright in Southland for 12 months.

But he quickly found the desire to put theory into practice himself on the land was a strong one, and that it would probably be in the South Island.

"I always had a sense it would be down here, you have the scale to operate on, and that is a



big part of the challenge, plus Canterbury is a good place to live."

After leaving Farmright Will worked for Spectrum Group, spending two years managing 800 cows on the business's Chertsey farm near Ashburton. When the opportunity arose to also manage the farm next door he took that on and shifted to the (then) 1,600 cow Singletree farm adjoining it.

Today that operation is 2,300 cows, the Chertsey farm is 870. Will and his wife Kim are sharemilkers on the Chertsey farm and sharemilkers-equity partners on the larger Singletree operation. As a business entity, they are 30% shareholders of Ashpouri Ltd which is the sharemilking company across both farms. Ashpouri also has a 30% share in the land company which owns both farms, known as Singletree.

Key stakeholders in the farm business include the van der Poel family, also from the Waikato. Will attributes being around people like the van der Poel's as having a significant positive

influence as he has moved through the ranks to be a stake holder in their business.

"I have found the more you rub shoulders with these sort of people who are forward thinking and positive themselves, the more it rubs off on you."

As part of his Young Farmer winnings he also got to participate in the Kellogg rural leadership programme, bringing him close to a range of successful people engaged in the agri-business sector.

That exposure proved invaluable in helping him manage the businesses through the downturn that followed.

"In any business it is the best operators who will survive and dairying was no different. There will always be a New Zealand dairy industry, it is not going away, and it comes down to your ability to manage those tough periods."

He said it is made that much easier to negotiate through tough patches in the dairy sector, thanks to the industry propensity to share information between operators.

"You also have a lot of people in the industry who are keen to give back to it. One of the things we did over the downturn was link up with some good farmers and share what we were doing."

"One of the things we learned was the value in collecting more numbers and data on our operation to better evaluate how we were going, and where we could become even more efficient."

He says the down turn was dealt with across two levels. The first involved closer scrutiny of farm costs, and particularly feed which formed about 50% of those costs at one stage.

This has required him and his staff to squeeze all they can from the cheapest feed source they have, pasture.





"It has come through managing pasture better, by being more aware of the optimal grazing point, and what the optimal residuals are when the cows come out so none is left wasted."

"If you can extract an extra 1t of dry matter a hectare a year, that is a lot of valuable feed you are not buying in."

With 16 staff it's no small job ensuring they all buy into the understanding that "green is gold" but he says with plenty of hands on input from himself.



"Rather than banging on about saving money, we would approach it by ensuring they would know what equations I was using to determine paddock/break size to make the operation more efficient with us all on the same page. Saving money became the outcome, rather than the sole objective." The outcome was helped by some smart adoption of new technology. With all the staff having cell phones some of the simplest tech has proven the most effective.

"In the case of optimising grazing areas, we got an app' that helped them to plan the size of a break for feeding. Everyone works it out the same way, we all get exactly the same area, and you have peace of mind what they have measured is exactly what I would have measured." He is proud to reveal this welcome initiative came from one of his tech savvy employees Danny Cajucom.

He laughs at the love affair his staff have with their smartphones, but appreciates the commonality it brings to farm decisions.

"Even when it comes to checking how much milk is in the vat, we will refer to our phones and look online, even if we are within reach of the docket!"

With 16 staff across the two businesses, of whom about a third are Kiwis, a common language is valuable and Will values the "good stable" crew he has managed to forge out across the two units.

Over a tough couple of years, it has been important to Will to recognise individual staff

ABOVE: Will values the "stable crew" he has managed to forge out across the two units
BELLOW: Lucy is ready to get her gumboots on and help mum and dad on the farm

members' abilities and talents. The gains they can contribute by applying themselves in an area they are interested in and enjoy will far outweigh any costs, and those gains come both in better returns, and happier staff. Staff assessments occur once a year with both parties honestly laying out where they see things heading next.

For new staff, his rule of thumb for assessing a potential staff member is how well they can hold a conversation over a cup of coffee around the kitchen table.

He also takes a simple straight up approach across all his business dealings. At a time when many operators were out to slice costs to the bone, he was also acknowledging it was tough for the person on the other side of whatever deal was being done.

"You really want a win:win with whoever you are dealing with. If you look to win at the other guy's expense, you will lose out yourself, sooner or later."

He says this is particularly pertinent for Canterbury dairy farmers who can benefit greatly by maintaining good relationships with their dry stock and cropping counterparts.

Will has spent the last couple of years tuning up all the cost areas, including irrigation costs by getting better data on irrigator application rates, using moisture strips for

optimal application times and recording soil temperatures.

From a financial perspective the farm system is signed onto DairyNZ's DairyBase benchmarking service which gives a district, regional and national comparison on farm operating benchmarks, including working expenses.

His goal has been to hold costs at \$3.50 kg milk solids, something he would like to keep it at as farm income prospects lift this season.

"But we know there will be more pressure there, but our goal is to contain and maintain where possible. However we already face a jump in genetics costs, and Canterbury has had some big (up to 30%) increases in electricity charges in the past year."

He agrees the past couple of years have "stress tested" the farm operation, and put it in good heart to ride the surge in returns this year, without experiencing a proportional increase in farm working expenses.

"This year we know we have done the hard work getting things down, it's a case of trying to keep them contained."

Like most dairy farmers in Canterbury Will is acutely aware that environmental constraints under the regional plan bring a new challenge to the dairy business. He challenges the value in trying to place a dairy-specific quota on the number of cows permittable in a region, and is optimistic Canterbury's sub-catchment approach will provide a sensible, sustainable pathway.

"It is about more than simply farming, it is about having a plan that recognises the value communities place upon farming within them, and that is why the sub-catchment committee approach is a good one, everyone is involved about it."

He anticipates there will continue to be some growth in dairying in some areas, albeit not at the rate witnessed in the past decade.

"And those farms that are created, they will have the latest in environmentally sound



technology and equipment, you simply cannot build a new farm to an 'average' standard."

In Canterbury wintering off is a feature that will also require some modifications, and he says that may include more crop variation, on pad feeding, and possibly even the release of a safe nitrification inhibitor at some stage.

Meantime the Singletree business has continued to grow, having recently bought into a joint purchase with Canlac dairies of Towerpeak Station in Southland.

With a foot in both the farm equity partner and sharemilker camp, Will and Kim are in a good position to have a balanced perspective on both.

Will believes recent adjustments to sharemilking payments will make the position a more appealing one for land owners to consider in the future, stymieing the decline in positions experienced recently.

ABOVE: Friendly cow, number 1030 came marching over to give Will a kiss

BELOW LEFT: Will recognises individual talent and applies his staff areas they are interested in and enjoy

BELOW RIGHT: He laughs at the love affair his staff have with their phones but appreciates the commonality it brings to farm decisions

While he and Kim have chosen a pathway working closely with older established investors, he maintains the industry can still offer a variety of pathways to suit everyone in it.

"There is no one size fits all in farming, and the opportunities are always there. Even with environmental constraints there are a new generation of farmers coming out of universities like Lincoln who have never known anything different, and are happy to manage them and deal with them."

"For me there is nothing to get me going more than if I am told I can't do something—it makes me want to go and prove I can!"





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Protect your cows from post calving diseases



Calving is a critical time in the dairy calendar because cows are at a higher risk of diseases which can have a significant impact on their ability to reach peak milk production, have a long lactation and get back in calf early.

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

Even before calving cows begin to eat less. At calving feed intake is at its lowest point and it takes 8-10 weeks for cows to reach maximum feed intakes. This reduced feed intake as calving approaches is a combined effect of less rumen capacity (because of the unborn calf) and the hormones of late pregnancy. When cows eat less before and after calving they tend to fall in to "negative" protein and energy balance.

When this occurs immune systems become less protective and the cows are at more risk of disease process being more significant than they would otherwise be.

To some degree we can compensate for this reduction in voluntary feed intake by increasing the energy density (quality) of the transition diet. This is often easier said than done. Transition feeding is now well described and well researched, but in many cases cows still calve on winter crops or spend very little time transitioning back to high quality pasture. If this is the case the rumen lining of these cows will be poorly developed, and cows will find it difficult to generate energy from feed.

Cows that have not been well transitioned are more likely to be affected by post calving diseases such as metritis (uterine infection) retained placenta, mastitis, ketosis and abomasal displacement. Even in well transitioned cows these diseases can be significant and you would be well advised to seek veterinary assistance to keep your cows healthy as you move through the calving period towards mating.

So how can your vet help you?

- Dairy veterinarians are well placed to visit the farm regularly for planned herd health visits. Recent research shows that early veterinary interventions optimise the chances of earlier return to oestrus.
- At these visits at-risk cows can be checked and treated. Veterinarians will perform full clinical examinations including internal examinations to accurately assess the health of the cow and the uterus.
- The use of antibiotics will be rationalised by these vet visits, and cow wellness will be maintained.
- Your vet will be able to monitor and test for ketosis and put an action plan in place to reduce the impact of ketosis in the herd. Ketosis is in part the result of poor transition management with negative energy balance. Ketosis has severe effects on cows including increasing the risk of retained placenta, displaced abomasum and infection.
- Metabolic diseases can also be monitored and tested for at these visits. Your herd may be on the tipping point for milk fever. Milk fever can increase the risk of difficulty calving, prolapsed uterus and mastitis. Your vet will be able to refine your metabolic management strategy including colostrum cows.
- Mastitis monitoring is important in early lactation. Your vet can assist you to assess the colostrum cows and what risk they are presenting for mastitis. An early season milking time mastitis risk assessment visit would be a very good idea. Milk cultures and bacterial sensitivity to antibiotics are now becoming a vital part of mastitis management and antibiotic management.

Having weekly preventive, pro-active herd health visits from your vet will ensure your herd is well positioned in early October to begin the preparation for mating. Leaving disease management to the last minute is false economy.

Could you set yourself the target of achieving 10% empty cows after 10 weeks of mating? To achieve this requires significant and skilled intervention to achieve high submission and conception rates.

Remember that early interventions are profitable because they shorten days to first service, improve first service conception, maintain cow condition, improve six-week in calf rate and minimise foetal loss.

Please talk to your dairy vet about a planned preventive approach to calving health.

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Make down cows a priority for a better outcome

Down cows are an inevitable part of calving. Getting a cow back on her feet and returned to the herd as quickly as possible is rewarding for you and the best outcome for the animal.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DAIRYNZ

A down cow is one that is sitting or lying on the ground and unable to get up. Cows can become recumbent for many reasons, and at any stage of their lactation cycle, but it most commonly occurs around calving time. Rapid treatment for the correct diagnosis, followed by nursing at a high standard, maximises a down cow's chance of recovery, and reduces stress for everyone during a busy calving season.

If the cow is not helped to get back on her feet quickly and given good, consistent care, secondary damage to muscles and nerves in the leg she is lying on can occur very quickly (within three to six hours) and become the reason she is unable to rise, regardless of the original cause of the cow going down. Complications from prolonged lying can include nerve damage in the lower areas of the back, hind limb or forelimb, muscle damage from compression of the major muscle groups, 'bed sores', mastitis, pneumonia, and hip dislocations.

Prevention

Taking steps to prevent cows from going down is worth focusing on. This includes careful mineral supplementation, good springer management, and accurate body condition scoring to ensure cows are not too fat or too thin. (See the DairyNZ website for more information on body condition scoring dairynz.co.nz/bcs)

There are three essential steps to managing down cows:

1. Diagnosis;
2. A clear decision on whether to treat and nurse the cow or euthanase; and
3. A treatment management plan.

Diagnosis

There are many causes of down cows, including:

- Calving paralysis;
- Metabolic disease (Milk Fever, low

- Potassium, fat cow syndrome, low phosphorus and Grass Staggers);
- Other infections such as toxic mastitis, acute metritis, acute gut infection;
- Gut diseases such as rumen acidosis, bloat, twisted gut;
- Injury (dislocations, breaks, muscle or tendon ruptures);
- Previous illnesses such as facial eczema.

Decision on treatment

DairyNZ Animal Husbandry Specialist, Anna Irwin, emphasises that managing a down cow involves a series of decisions. "One of the crucial early decisions is whether to persist with treatment or humanely euthanase the cow. It's a tough and often difficult decision, but if a down cow cannot be nursed at a high standard of care it is better for the cow's welfare that she is euthanased within a short time as her chances of recovery will be low." If a down cow is drowsy, depressed and non-responsive or very ill, an immediate diagnosis should be made to determine whether treatment is an option. If she is still alert (bright, aware of her surroundings and responsive), treatment should begin as quickly as possible.

Prompt treatment of the primary condition with the appropriate medications will maximise the cow's chances of a quick recovery. In some cases, a cow may recover on the same day. If it's looking like it will take longer, she should be moved to a suitable, dedicated nursing area.

If the cow cannot stand on her own within 48 hours of going down, you should seek veterinary advice.

Treatment management plan

Down cows should be a priority no matter what else is happening on-farm. An early response will ensure a better outcome.

DairyNZ Animal Husbandry Manager, Helen Thoday, says there is a need to move away

from a one size fits all approach to down cows. "A professional approach means slowing down and taking time to make the right decisions."

Whatever the cause, the management of all down cows should include:

- Checking the cow's environment for risks such as powerlines, waterways or other animals;
- Making an accurate diagnosis immediately so you know how to treat her - if you are unsure ask a vet;
- Moving her off hard surfaces and out of cold, hot or wet weather;
- Checking her posture—so if she is lying on her side, put her up onto her chest and support her;
- Treating the problem appropriately and promptly—early treatment promotes early recovery;
- Getting her back on her feet quickly to avoid secondary damage;
- Considering euthanasia if treatment is not a viable option—this should be performed as soon as possible to minimise suffering.

Anna Irwin says good nursing of a down cow takes time and energy but is worth it. "It can be labour intensive and time consuming but is well worth doing if the cow has a reasonable chance of recovery and you have a staff member who is willing and able to dedicate themselves to the task. An Australian study showed that within the first week of care, a well-nursed cow is seven times more likely to recover than if managed poorly."

Nursing a down cow requires:

- Providing a dedicated area with barriers;
- Providing clean, dry and soft bedding that will provide a non-slip surface when the cow tries to stand;
- Providing a continuous supply of clean water and good feed;



- Moving the cow from side to side every three hours to ensure her weight is not always to one side if she is unable to swap sides by herself, and flex and extend the hind limbs each time the cow is moved;
- Regularly hand stripping milk from the udder;
- Regularly encouraging the cow to rise;
- Using lifting devices to get her to her feet only—never leave cows hanging in lifting devices.

Barriers will prevent the cow from crawling or falling over if she tries to walk. A pen can be built from large hay bales or gates, leaving a space that is small enough for her to stand in without walking or turning around in, but large enough to be comfortable.

It is vital to note which leg the cow is sitting on each time she is checked. If the cow cannot swap sides by herself, she must be rolled frequently onto her other side, especially if she is trying to stand up.

Hip lifters should only be used to assist a cow into a standing position, not to suspend a cow that is unable to stand without the additional support of a breast strap or sling.

Padded hip clamps should be applied firmly then raised slowly using a frontend loader or hoist to assist the cow to stand. Using a breast strap under the brisket in conjunction with hip clamps is recommended good practice as it helps the cow up onto its front legs as the hips are raised. The additional support also minimises discomfort for the cow and provides some additional restraint, making the process safer for you and the cow. Using a full sling to stand a cow up is not recommended as the pressure on the cow's abdomen causes the muscles in the hind leg to relax.

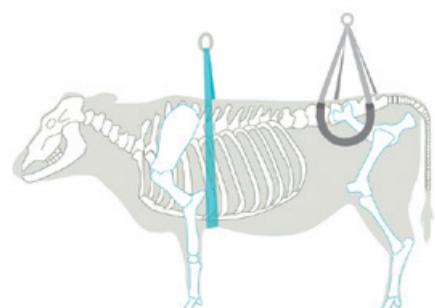
It is acceptable to move a cow a short distance using a sling or breast strap, with a correctly applied hip clamp, as long as it doesn't cause the cow any undue discomfort or distress. If you need to move a cow longer distances, use a transport tray, tandem trailer or front end loader bucket. Regardless of the method of transport, the cow must be adequately restrained to prevent any additional harm, pain or undue distress.

If the cow is still down after four days, a re-assessment should be made of whether it is worth continuing treatment. However, some cows, with careful care, can take a week to recover.

ABOVE: A down cow is one that is sitting or lying on the ground and unable to get up

A detailed plan outlining down cow management on your farm will improve your chances of success. It is recommended that one or more of your staff members understands the guidelines around down cows, is in charge of making decisions about, and caring for, down cows, and knows where required equipment is stored and how to use it. We encourage you to have an established process for making decisions about the diagnosis, treatment and care of down cows, including when to call a vet for assistance.

Correct placement of hip lifters and brisket



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Cooling it down in Rakaia

Six Below is the newest innovative Ruralco Supplier offering quality cost-effective dairy farm solutions.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES BY JASON MCKENZIE

Established in 2015 by business partners Mike Lamond and Andrew Hopson, Six Below provides farms with milk cooling and heat recovery systems as well as associated on-farm services such as water filtration and pumps, insulated silo wraps and milk monitoring. Both Andrew and Mike have extensive experience in the dairy industry as well as in the construction, water pump and cooling systems sectors.

Six Below was formed from their belief that they could structure their business offering and their products and services with the farmer desires foremost, whether it be quality proven products, simplicity or affordability.

Six Below specialises in milk cooling systems – their units are built and pre-commissioned in Rakaia and have the advantage of having all the hardware stored in one cabinet, essentially a “plug and play” system. There are a range of options on offer including dynamic systems if power supply allows, or energy efficient storage systems depending on the farms environment and budget. The units arrive on site ready to go with all the electrics and engineering done at Rakaia, which minimises time on farm and therefore job costs. It's worth noting that their hourly rates are realistic with no call out charges and their 12-month warranty not only includes parts but more importantly labour and travel costs. Ruralco Cardholders will also receive an additional discount on any cooling units or refrigeration work purchased.

In today's tough economic climate for dairy farmers Six Below's focus on cost effectiveness is a key factor in both their success and company ethos. As well as cooling units, two additional products offered by Six Below are milk silo insulation and milk monitoring units. Both offer the latest innovative technology and are reasonably priced and are also beneficial to farmers in order to comply with the upcoming milk cooling regulations taking effect from June 2018.

The M2 Milk Monitor is a locally manufactured stand-alone system and is basically a data-logging unit that records milk and water temperatures and CIP data as outlined in the new regulations. Using only quality electronic components – for example touch screens and internet and mobile network hardware - data is available at the shed and via any internet connected device with an alert system that sends a text should any parameter not be within regulations. This is a much cheaper option than an overall on farm monitoring system and there is an extra discount available for Ruralco Cardholders.

Insulated silo wraps are also supplied and installed by Six Below and Mike explains that they can be a low cost solution to a snap chilling

IMAGE: Their hourly rates are realistic with no call out charges and their 12-month warranty not only includes parts but more importantly labour and travel costs.

system if the dairy is on the borderline of meeting new regulations, “often it's just a case of a few degrees to get the milk to the right temperature and vat insulation can protect against heat gain as well as reduce load on your milk chilling system”. The wraps offered by the company have been developed in conjunction with a local supplier and independently tested with proven savings of 40% with one case study on a Culverden dairy saving 60% over the summer months on refrigeration power usage. Obviously dependant on the farm environment but generally payback on capital cost is within two years. They consist of a woollen insulation blanket sandwiched between two layers of 650gm PVC with all stainless steel fixings. They come with a 5-year warranty and a 7% discount for Ruralco Cardholders so are definitely worth considering for cardholders with milk storage issues before the tighter new regulations take effect next year.

Six Below prides itself on building lasting relationships with suppliers and cardholders. Mike believes “little things go a long way” in today's business climate, from listening to farmers, using trusted product, or tidy workmanship. Both Mike and Andrew are passionate about the Six Below ethos that is based on old school values of honesty, fairness and reliability; “it's all about doing what you say you're going to do, at the end of the day you are only as good as your last job and we genuinely feel we have quality products at the best price out there”.



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Biomax Nitro-gib-S has been tested and designed especially for New Zealand climates and farming practises to ensure they are easily absorbed by plants and supported superior nutrient cycling and nutrient availability in the soil.

Biomax Nitro-gib-S delivers dry matter growth rates beyond 75kg Urea and a common gibberellin products.

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Photo: Gary Harrison and Doug Sheldon

"I have been applying all types of products over the last 8 years and have found that Nitro-gib-S is the one product I can rely on to substantially increase dry matter."

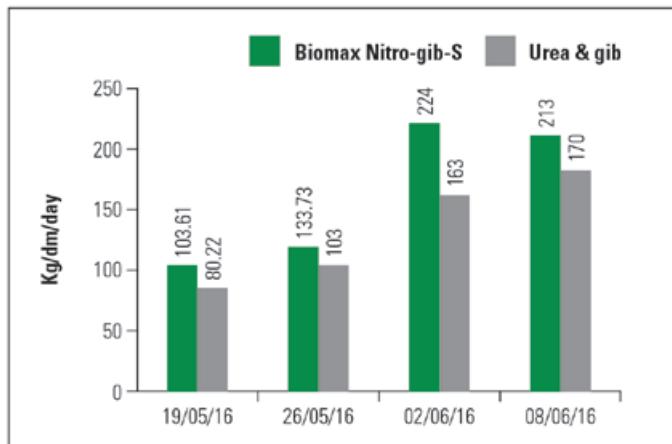
"In my own trial, I applied Nitro-gib-S to a paddock that was producing only 35kg per hectare per day, 14 days after application this was increased to 65kg per hectare per day."

Gary Harrison

Pacific Ag
as seen in the
NOVACHEM
Agricultural
Manual



Biomax Nitro-gib-S trial data



The trial above is a comparative trial between Urea (at 75kg/ha) and a common gibberellin product applied to the same area and Nitro-gib-S applied.

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ONE⁵⁰ AR37: New Zealand's top selling perennial ryegrass

The advice is simple, look towards proven performers to ensure you aren't caught short with your home grown perennial feed. For the 2017 sowing season ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass has reclaimed its position as NZ's largest selling perennial ryegrass.

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM



New products can come and go, but in the end, production and performance 'over time' is how a perennial should and will be judged. One thing that can be claimed is that ONE⁵⁰ has proven itself across our market over several years.

ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass provides the combination of excellent plant genetics¹ with the option to include novel endophyte technology. This combination enables the potential to lift the production and persistence on farm.

ONE⁵⁰ has been Agricom's flagship perennial ryegrass for several years. As a new variety it quickly gained a solid marketplace reputation following on from the success of early adopters. The National Forage Variety Testing (NFVT), set up by the Plant Breeding and Research Association (NZPTRA) tests many commercial and pre-commercial cultivars side-by-side in many locations. Based off NZPTRA statistics during 2012/13 ONE⁵⁰ was NZ's largest selling ryegrass*. Each January new industry statistics are made available and despite losing that title between 2013 to 2016, ONE⁵⁰ has reclaimed its position as NZ's largest selling perennial ryegrass.

With many perennial ryegrass cultivars and endophytes now on the market, it is important to make educated choices as to what is right for your farm. ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass is a late heading (+20 days) solid performer, often exceeding farmers' expectations since its release. It is no surprise that it is a popular choice for sheep & beef or dairy systems, due to its excellent production and particularly strong growth from summer through to winter.

The Forage Value Index (FVI) produced by DairyNZ is based on data produced by the National Forage Variety Testing (NFVT) trials. This gives each variety a rating (out of 5 stars) based on the economic benefit that a particular cultivar offers over earlier standard cultivars first tested between 1991 and 1996. ONE⁵⁰ is a (maximum) 5 star performer in the Dairy NZ FVI which further endorses this variety's performance.

Another important feature of using the FVI as a selection tool has been the opportunity to put a value on the different pasture production achieved when using different endophytes. ONE⁵⁰ with AR37 has consistently produced more

drymatter than ONE⁵⁰ with AR1, leading to ONE⁵⁰ AR37 having a five star value while AR1 ONE⁵⁰ has a three star value, equating to between \$107–\$321 economic benefit per hectare, per year**.

It is clear now more than ever that using AR37 endophyte in a proven perennial ryegrass cultivar like ONE⁵⁰ is an investment you can have confidence in. ONE⁵⁰ can provide the combination of excellent plant genetics¹ and novel endophyte technology. These combined allow the ability to lift both production and persistence. The major leap forward with the introduction of novel endophytes, in particular AR37, has lifted ryegrass plant's tolerance to a wider range of insects and the dollar value of this is showing through in the FVI.

For more information on ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass, novel endophytes or the FVI contact the Ruralco Seed team.

*The NZPTRA's statistics are generated from a rolling three years of sales where sales volumes are submitted by seed companies for their cultivars to contest becoming the 'Standard' in the following year's national trials.

**Upper South Island figures. See www.dairynz.co.nz/fvi for more detail.

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- 2100 x 1225mm
- 2440 x 1225mm

EXTRAS

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

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- New Trailcom 1500kg hubs and stubs
- New 14" 8 ply tyres
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- 5 leaf 1000kg springs
- 15mm plywood floor
- Trailcom coupling 1 7/8" std
- Stop tail indicator lights inc. plug
- Std 12 month warranty
- WOF supplied
- LED lights

FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

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

EXTRAS

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

TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



STANDARD FEATURES

- RHS frame 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 inc. plug
- Std 12 month warranty
- WOF supplied
- LED lights

FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

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

EXTRAS

- Hydraulic over-ride disc brakes
- Stock crates
- Jockey wheel
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- Trailcom coupling 1 7/8" std
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- Springs with oscillating suspension

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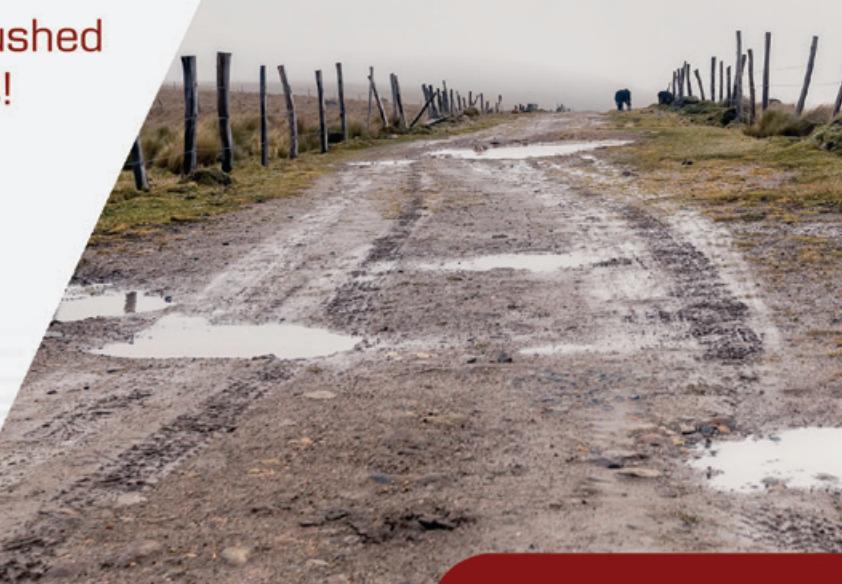
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Ruralco Instore Days 2017

Site holders in this year's Ruralco Instore Days were encouraged to bring their "game faces" and the feedback from the Best Site Award judges' indicates they well and truly delivered.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

With only limited numbers of sites available at the two day event, site holders are carefully selected to ensure farmers experience the best of the best by way of products, expertise and special offers. Since its inception 23 years ago, Instore Days has grown dramatically, especially over the last five years and has now reached full capacity with around 100 site holders situated in the Ashburton Ruralco store and under the big marquee in the carpark.

This year's hotly contested Best Site Awards were judged by Sam Robinson, young farmer and mental health ambassador; Jock Ross, farmer and former All Black; Kendra Cocksedge, current Black Fern; and Duncan Humm, farmer and administrator for the NZ Farming Facebook page.

In announcing the winners, the judges said it was a huge day getting around all of the sites and interacting with everyone but it had been quite enlightening. "It was quite time consuming but that's because we took it quite seriously. We all learnt a lot of from talking to the different site holders," said Duncan.

All of the winning sites had one thing in common—they all displayed a vast amount of knowledge and expertise in their particular fields and were able to deliver it in a meaningful way to farmers.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Rob Sharkie & Steve Taylor; Cardholders enjoying their lunch provided; Judges for the 2017 Best Site Awards; Sam Dalziel, Hannah McCulloch and Jarrad Mehlhopt.



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Best Retail Supplier Site:

WINNER: EuroSteel

RUNNER UP: Shoof International

Judge Jock Ross said EuroSteel stood out because of their passion for their products. "It's pretty hard to make wire and netting glamorous and they did."

Mark O'Keefe, Territory Manager Upper South Island and Marty Murchison, Territory Manager Lower South Island said the win was "massive" for them. They said it was a huge privilege to be invited and they'd taken nothing for granted so winning the Best Retail Supplier Site was a real bonus.

Instore Days offered a unique experience and was an opportunity for the business to showcase its products, they said. "We are very proud of our



products and this has been a great opportunity to interact with our customers."

EuroSteel has its head office in Auckland while manufacturing takes place in Christchurch. Among the items on show at the Instore Days were their X Fence product, which is 24% stronger than traditional tite grip and has a variety of uses including all sorts of stock fencing, including horses; security fencing and predatory exclusion fencing. It is the second time the company has attended Instore Days and they are keen to return again next year.

Best Business Partner Site:

WINNER: Ballance Agri-Nutrients

RUNNER UP: Agriseeds

Ballance Regional Sales Manager (Central South Island), Scott Cozens said the win was extremely pleasing for his team. "We've been coming to Instore Days for a number of years. Ruralco is a key partner for us in the central South Island area and my whole team enjoys working with them."

"This year we tried a different layout which was more open and inviting for people to come and talk to us and it seemed to work. We had five staff on hand throughout the two day event."

Judge Sam Robinson agreed saying the big team had a great interactive site which was very informative and all of the staff displayed great knowledge.

"Our focus this year was on our spring recommendations for customers. It was nitrogen focused and included our PhaSedN (for pasture) and Actyva S (arable) products. PhaSedN covers all of your nitrogen and sulphur needs for winter and early spring while Actyva S is an ideal fertiliser for a variety of arable and forage crops," said Scott.

He said there was steady interest over the two day event, with farmers talking more positively than in recent years, although he acknowledge farmers had generally kept up with their fertiliser application because they recognised it was very hard to catch up.

Best Card Supplier Site:

WINNER: Compliance Partners

RUNNER UP: G J Blacklows

Judges Duncan Humm and Kendra Cocksedge were impressed with the passion and excitement displayed by Compliance Partners' advisors, Jane Fowles and Moira Briscoe. "We got educated on the health side of health and safety and their site got me thinking about what I can do in my own business," said Duncan.

Compliance Partners are based in Ashburton and Timaru and provide up to date solutions in the areas of Health and Safety, Human Resources and Occupational Health Monitoring. Advisor Jane Fowles said it was so exciting to win. "It wasn't what we were trying to do so was a real bonus. We're pleased the judges liked our site."

"We had a really good couple of days with lots of good conversations and we carried out lots of blood pressure and finger prick glucose checks. We ended up sending a few to the doctor to get checked out."

Jane said there was plenty of interest and lots of questions from farmers. "We busted a few health and safety myths around drug testing, health monitoring and legal requirements."

It was the second time the business had attended Instore Days and Jane said the on-the-spot health checks had proved to be a popular attraction.

"It's great to give something back. We are pleased to be supporting Ruralco and to be involved in providing training to cardholders."

Successful formula set to continue

Over recent years the Ruralco team has fine-tuned and tweaked the successful Instore Days formula to ensure maximum benefits for cardholders. This means great deals negotiated on their behalf, a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends and family, and access to the latest innovations, knowledge and expertise. It's a formula set to continue as the Ruralco team looks toward its 25th Instore Days in 2019.

This year there were a number of participants who brought new products and ideas to Instore Days. "These new products are all designed to help farmers farm smarter. They are designed to increase productivity, to be efficient and cost effective," said Ruralco Group CEO, Rob Sharkie.

Among the new products on show were effluent tanks from Dan Cosgrove Ltd and an Activator Strap from Strainrite. Both businesses found Instore Days to be a great opportunity to showcase their products.

For Dan Cosgrove, it is only the second time the business had taken part in Instore Days, but Mike

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Would a water tax sink or swim?

The latest calls from Greens and Labour for a water tax refer to the tax being applied in a ‘fair’ way. In reality this would be virtually impossible to achieve.

WORDS BY ANDREW CURTIS CEO OF IRRIGATION NZ, IMAGES BY IRRIGATION NZ

A key reason is the geography and climate of New Zealand, which means our drier east coast regions use the most water. Canterbury accounts for just under 60% of regional water use, Otago just over 10% and the other three summer dry east coast regions around 5% each. This means a water tax would be predominantly a regional tax on east coast communities who would be funding the ‘fix-up’ for other regions environmental issues. Is there anything fair about this model?

Irrigation New Zealand has met with the Greens and Labour to discuss their proposal. The Greens want national meetings and hui to decide a ‘fair and equitable’ process for creating and distributing the tax. I can’t see meetings solving the problem, because it needs an extremely complex tax system to account for water use at a sub-regional level that would be an expensive administrative nightmare.

For example, if the Greens’ proposed 10 cents per litre tax for water bottlers was applied to all 6.5 billion cubic meters of consented irrigation water, there would be a \$650 billion-plus tax bill. The GDP of New Zealand is only about \$250 billion. Depending on location, water use can range from 1,500 to 5,500 cubic metres per hectare per year. If a water tax is to avoid perverse outcomes for irrigated agriculture, it would need to be set at the sub-catchment level.

The other point that needs discussion is whether a water tax is the best way of achieving the purpose for which it’s being established. Labour and the Greens want the water tax to fund environmental improvement projects and the modernisation of water infrastructure, and to encourage more efficient water use.

The first step in answering the above question is to understand how and where water is used in New Zealand. According to the Land Air Water Aotearoa website, irrigation makes up just over 60% of national water use, followed by town and stock water (both about 15%). Industrial water use accounts for about 5%, although much of this is mixed up with town water supply. Most irrigation scheme takes also provide water supply for stock and local towns.

Irrigation will always require more water relative to other uses. Plant physiology dictates this. Without regular watering, plants will wither and die.

However, if hydroelectric power generation was included in water use figures, the share taken by irrigation would drop from 60% to about 25%. Hydro-electric power generation is a commercial use of water, generating considerable profits for power companies and preventing others from using the water. A tax on hydrogeneration would create higher power prices which would affect the poorer sections of our society most.



ABOVE: Andrew Curtis, CEO of Irrigation NZ

Another question to consider is what impact does a water tax have on other taxes? In New Zealand, we already have income and business tax. Irrigation increases farm profitability. A 200 hectare dryland sheep and beef farm in Canterbury typically pays \$15,000 in tax. When irrigated, profitability increases this tax bill to about \$75,000. A water tax will reduce farm profitability and reduce its business and income tax. We need to understand the net effect of this change. Does switching one tax for another drive greater efficiency or create more complications?

For all of these reasons, it would in reality be impractical to apply a water tax in a way that was ‘equitable and fair’.

The current regulatory regime, underpinned by the Freshwater Management National Policy Statement has already implemented major changes - as any Canterbury irrigator will tell you. Audited Farm Environment Plans are driving more efficient use of water. The best progress on solving water use issues is currently being made through communities having the tools to understand their local issues and finding local solutions to this.

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The changing face of immigration

Long term migrant workers in the South Island have been given a year's opportunity to obtain residence via the introduction of the South Island Contribution Visa.

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HEARTLAND IMMIGRATION

The new policy is welcome news for migrants and their families who have previously not had an option to apply for residence. Over 1,600 migrant workers and their families who have built a life for themselves in the South Island over the past five years, while on temporary visas, will finally have a pathway to residence if all criteria is met. This is a very exciting change for Canterbury with dairy farms, aged care facilities and hospitality outlets most likely to have long term workers eligible for the South Island Contribution Visa. "The plan to allow long term and settled South Island workers to remain in the industries they are serving is a sensible solution and will bring stability to a number of migrant families, employers and local rural communities. This is fantastic news

for migrants who have been in NZ for over five years and qualify for the visa," says Mary Noonan, Managing Director of Heartland Immigration.

The South Island Contribution Visa is a two-tier process requiring eligible migrants to apply for a two year work visa, during which time, they must remain in their declared industry and also remain located in the South Island. At the expiry of the initial two years, migrants will apply for residence which will be subject to them remaining for an additional two years, again, within the industry and in the South Island. To be eligible, applicants must have worked in the South Island for five years, be younger than 56 years and of good health and character. Applications are required to be made on

paper, before the 23 May 2018 (there is no option to apply online).

The other changes of note to Immigration policy, is to Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Work Visa Instructions. Two remuneration thresholds are being introduced which will work to complement the current method of determining skill levels. Previously, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) determined skill levels based solely on the Australian New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) guidelines. The migrant's list of duties needed to be matched to a finite list of job titles, with each role assigned a skill level determined by relevant qualifications and work experience based on those traditionally found in those undertaking the same role. The ANZSCO



guidelines are based on duties historically found in those undertaking the roles and everything needed to be exactly aligned which lacked imagination or any leeway, and created a barrier for emerging industries, those with merged job roles, and creative thinking employers.

Proposed remuneration thresholds will be a critical determinator in awarding points for SMC applicants. Migrants will no longer get points for qualifications in an area of "absolute skills shortage", or for experience and qualifications in future growth areas, such as ICT and creative industries. SMC applicants must earn the New Zealand median income of \$48,859 a year for jobs to be considered skilled. The other threshold will be set at 1.5 times the New Zealand median income of \$73,299 a year (hourly rate of \$35.24) for jobs that are not currently considered skilled but are well paid.

"This is a win-win for employees and employers which INZ have previously considered to be lower skilled yet are valuable workers and are paid accordingly. This opens up the opportunity for those without formal qualifications but are higher earners to be considered skilled for work visa purposes and most significantly for residence," says Mary.

What this ultimately means is, if an applicant would earn less than the median New Zealand income of \$48,859, they won't get any points towards their residence application - even if their job was previously considered as skilled. If employers wish to retain migrant staff, they will have to pay them above this threshold. Which in turn, combats the belief that skilled migrants are replacing local workers and stopping industry wages from growing.

Any migrant who would earn more than \$73,299 a year—one-and-a-half times the median income—will get points, even if they work in an area not previously classified as skilled. There are also "bonus points" on offer for anyone paid more than \$97,718 a year, while there will also be more points available for work experience, post-graduate degrees, and people aged between 30 and 39.

"Principal applicants, their immediate families, and employers are certain to benefit from changes implemented to refocus how INZ determine who should be granted a work visa and who is eligible for residence under the SMC. Extending the definition of skilled work with an income level will be a great bonus. However, there is a strong argument that the proposed threshold is too high and that the 1.5 formula is excessive given the restraints of using ANZSCO as the defining

marker of skill levels, qualifications required and tasks undertaken in any given role," explains Mary.

This is a game changer for SMC applicants and their employers, particularly for those in emerging industries or with duties which don't fall exactly within the clunky definitions set out in ANZSCO. Inclusion in ANZSCO at the right level was critical to INZ when determining visas and totally inflexible given the one size fits all approached narrowed the focus to predetermined and often traditional duties within roles.

The future focus for work visas will also be on these pay rates paired alongside skill levels set out by ANZSCO. The skill level will determine the length and conditions of the visa and most significantly for the prospective employer, what documentation they are required to provide as evidence they are unable to recruit within New Zealand.

Lower skilled workers will be limited to a total stay in New Zealand of three years, their families will not automatically be able to remain with them, no pathway to residence will be available and their prospective employers will need to make a case to employ them. Signalling a strong message that temporary workers are exactly that; people who fill skill and labour shortages for a finite time. In a push to emphasise a "New Zealander First" approach to employment, dependency on temporary workers, or what some refer to as cheap labour, is actively being discouraged by the introduction of the new policy. Employers of SMC migrants must demonstrate that they value migrant employees via providing satisfactory working conditions and salaries.

DISCLAIMER: Mary Noonan is the Managing Director of Heartland Immigration Ltd and her views, expressed in this article, are not intended to replace the professional service provided to individual migrants by a Licensed Immigration Advisers





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Rudolph Linde

BUSINESS SALES MANAGER

rudolph.linde@genesisenergy.co.nz

027 557 4045

Rudolph was born and raised on a diversified farm in South Africa, producing wheat, barley, lucerne and oats. He's milked cows, reared ostriches, and bred commercial and stud sheep and cattle.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Agricultural Sciences, Rudolph managed a corporate farming entity before emigrating to New Zealand seven years ago, where he was involved in managing agribusinesses. During this time, Rudolph also completed a Bachelor of Animal Health Sciences (PGDip) and a Master in Business Administration.

He is truly passionate about the NZ primary industry and the unique value proposition Kiwi ingenuity deliver within this sector. In his spare time, Rudolph enjoys being with his family, exercising and the outdoors. He is also a very committed All Black supporter.



Andrea Annabell

AGRIBUSINESS TERRITORY MANAGER
TARANAKI/HAWKES BAY/LOWER NORTH ISLAND

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027 560 5897

Andrea was born and bred in South Taranaki, and attained a Bachelor of Applied Science majoring in Agribusiness. After university, she

worked as a rural officer for Rabobank in Hawera for three years before going on an OE. Once back home she took a hands-on role on a dairy farm for a couple of years.

Last year she and her husband took on an 800ha drystock lease near Hawera. Andrea loves working with animals and enjoys both drystock and dairying.



Laura Peters

AGRIBUSINESS TERRITORY MANAGER
NORTHLAND/AUCKLAND/WAIKATO

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Laura grew up in Onewhero, south of Pukekohe, on a 10-acre lifestyle block where the family reared calves, lambs and pigs. This role sees Laura returning to the land after six and a half years working in the energy industry.



Rebecca Law

AGRIBUSINESS TERRITORY MANAGER OTAGO/SOUTHLAND (TIMARU DOWN TO INVERCARGILL)

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027 562 6047

Rebecca grew up on her parent's dairy farm in the Bay of Plenty and now lives in Central Otago. Rebecca studied agribusiness at Lincoln University and worked on several farms from large scale dairy to high country sheep and beef.

Rebecca has worked in the agribusiness field for the past seven years. In her spare time, she enjoys being out in the mountains and competing in adventure racing.



Pete McCorkindale

AGRIBUSINESS TERRITORY MANAGER
CANTERBURY (TOP OF SOUTH ISLAND DOWN TO TIMARU)

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027 594 5190

Pete has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Hons) degree from Lincoln University and has spent the last 20 years working in the farming industry. Pete's consulted, run a large dairy farm, taught dairy farming and serviced the farming industry. He's spent the last 11 years with PGG Wrightson and sold farms and lifestyle blocks before joining Genesis Energy as an Agribusiness Territory Manager in the Canterbury Region.

Pete lives on a small block in Doyleston, a rural town 30 minutes from Christchurch, with his wife Julie, 3 teenage children, 2 dogs, a pony, and some chickens. When Pete's not working, he enjoys time with his family, playing tennis, rugby, running and spending time outdoors working on the block.





We need to shout about it—irrigation is good for the environment

Irrigation is good for farming and for the environment. This message needs to be made loud and clear. So what are three key good things about irrigation for the environment? WORDS SUPPLIED BY NICK PYKE CEO, FOUNDATION FOR ARABLE RESEARCH

1. Irrigation reduces nutrient loss

Irrigation is a very effective tool to mitigate N loss through leaching. Irrigation ensures that the plant is actively growing, and if it is growing, it is relatively easy to work out the nutrient requirement of the plant for each stage of growth and apply the amount of nutrients, particularly nitrogen, to meet the plant demand. This means there is no need to apply extra N, as all N applied is available to the actively growing plant. This is apparent from FAR research which shows 7 kg/tonne of wheat less nitrogen is required to optimise yield in irrigated wheat than in dryland wheat crops. The extra N applied in the dryland crop is required to ensure N is available when the plant needs it, irrespective of the weather conditions. In many situations, the extra N in dryland crops is not utilised as it is not available to the plant due to unfavourable soil conditions. This means there is the potential for it to be leached by a rainfall event during the growing season or as excess N at the end of the season.

2. Irrigation improves soil water holding capacity and reduces irrigation demand

Long term trials (14 years) comparing irrigation and dryland crop production on a Templeton soil at the FAR Chertsey Research site have shown increases in soil carbon in the irrigated treatments compared to the dryland, irrespective of the crop establishment practice. This soil improvement has resulted in a 3% increase in the water holding capacity of the soil, which means that at field capacity it will hold an extra 1mm of water. This may not sound like much but, if there were 10 rainfall events which returned the soil to field capacity this would supply an

extra 10mm to the crop which would then not be needed from irrigation. While this will result in savings for farmers of say \$25 per ha, the major saving is in the volume of water applied. There are approximately 130,000 ha of irrigated arable land in New Zealand and if each of these hectares can store an extra mm of water, due to increased water holding capacity, then each rainfall event will save 1.2 billion litres of water.

3. Improvements in soil quality reduce N leaching

Improving soil quality through irrigation so that it has a higher water holding capacity means there is less drainage, and less drainage means that less N is leached. If there are 10 rainfall events per year where the soil moisture exceeds field capacity, then using the scenario above that is 10mm less water that is lost in drainage. The average drainage figure from a fluxmeter project in the Canterbury region, across three farms over three years, was approximately 13mm/year and the average N loss was 6.7kg/N/ha or 0.5kgN/mm leached. Thus in the dryland scenario it is possible an extra 10mm of may be lost, which could equate to a loss of a further 5kg/ha of N to the ground water.

These are just some of the potential impacts of irrigation to improve the environment. Irrigation also means it is possible to have active plant growth throughout the year, thus reducing the risk of wind erosion or surface sediment runoff.

Irrigation can have huge benefits to the environment. These are the very things that irrigation is often claimed, with no limited scientific evidence, to cause. We need to celebrate that irrigation can increase stream flows reduce water extraction from aquifers and reduce N leaching to ground water.

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Vehicles, plant and machinery are one of the most important parts of a highly productive farm. Ensuring the health and wellbeing of your fleet is important to bottom line success. However, keeping up to date with maintenance as well as WOF/COF, registration, RUCs and keeping up with health and safety requirements is a time-consuming job – time that could be spent better elsewhere.

With the help of online fleet management programs, fleet owners can stay on top of all the many requirements necessary to comply with health and safety laws and keep the fleet up-to-date. For example, do you know when your vehicles are due for WOF/COF or registration? Do you know when your fleet was last serviced and what was done at the service? Are your workers taking ownership in identifying issues and reporting problems with the vehicles and plant they are using? How easily accessible is any of this information? Knowing and being able to respond quickly to these questions can save a lot of time and money.

The benefits of a well-maintained fleet are clear. Just like a human body, prevention is better than cure. The unnecessary costs that can occur because a minor problem that was not resolved and has now resulted in a major breakdown can be substantial. Having a fleet management system can make the difference and save you money. Being issued a police fine because your COF expired over 3 months ago is an unnecessary expense. Similarly, not realising your tractor is 100 hours overdue for a service can lead to minor problems not being immediately addressed and leading to major, potentially costly problems.

Having an online fleet management system can make easily accessible information on when WOF/COF, registration and services are due and

keep a log of the service history thereby reducing administration time and increasing administrative efficiency. Manual paperwork is time-consuming and laborious, especially when you really need to find that invoice or warranty document that is filed deep within the accounts and you are not even sure where to start? Fleet management programs are designed to make this process a lot easier as they often include automatic filing, searchable history databases, and cloud storage. Next time an alternator breaks down and you are positive it was replaced "only six months ago", you can find the service history with a quick search in your fleet management software and resolve the issue in a timely manner.

Finally, providing and maintaining a safe fleet is a health and safety requirement. Under the new health and safety legislation, work vehicles are considered to be a workplace, therefore falling under the health and safety workplace requirements. To meet some of these requirements, fleet owners need to have a system that allows employees to identify risks, a filing and report system that helps you produce and keep records easily, and an alert system that brings necessary matters to your attention so they can be resolved sooner rather than later. Implementing these systems is important but time-consuming. The benefit of a fleet management system is it consolidates all of these systems in one program.

It is essential in this modern day to have good systems in place. Systems that help meet requirements for a healthy, productive and legally-compliant farm. When it comes to your fleet, having a fleet management system will ensure you are keeping your fleet up-to-date, avoiding major breakdowns, saving administrative time and money, keeping workers engaged and staying compliant with health and safety requirements.

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PY203	1991 2.8 D 2WD S/C	Reminder date	11/06/2017
EJ5213	420	Service due	12/1/2017
BKY834	Legacy	WOF/COF due	3/4/2017

Pre-start comments			
1999 3.0 D 4WD D/C	Possible coolant leak on top tank of radiator, dash lights are not working with key on before starting engine	Henry Williams	20/06/2017
Trailer	On/off switch not working	Lachie Hamilton	20/06/2017
716	Left hand revision mirror loose cable ties holding it together	Joel Hewson	19/06/2017
2015 SR 5 3.0 TD	Horn not working	Workshop Office	19/06/2017
535 Quadtrac	Major Service finished by Cochrane's last Friday, next due at 7850 hours	Henry Williams	19/06/2017

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Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge set to perform

Whether you are one of the world's best, a mountain bike enthusiast or avid runner, or simply a family out there to have fun running or biking, the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge has it all.

WORDS BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

Now into its 11th year, the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge is gearing up for another mammoth multi-sport event on November 26. Plans for this year's event are already well underway, with early bird entries open.

Last year was the biggest in the event's history with entries sold out a week out from race day, amassing more than 1,400 runners, walkers and

mountain bikers, raising \$23,000 each for co-organisers Longbeach School and the Hinds and District Lions. And they're expecting it to be no different this year.

One competitor who will be back again is local mountain biker Kristine Marriott, although she's yet to decide in which event. Kristine (43) has competed in the 35km mountain bike race no

less than five times, taking out the women's overall title on three separate occasions.

"It's just a fantastic event," said Kristine. "I love coming back, not only because it's a local event that I like to support, but because they do an amazing job; it's very well run. It's also a fun day out for the whole family with so many options available. It's a great event for people who just want to go out there and give it a go."

But as a competitive mountain biker, she said it appeals because it's quite different from a lot of other mountain bike rides. "I think people underestimate it a lot because they think it's going to be easy, but to be competitive, you have to be fit."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Anton Cooper receiving his medal; The course involves a little bit of everything, Anton Cooper coming across the finish line; Winner of the Paul Wylie Cyclerama bike raffle 2016



It has a little bit of everything, from steep sharp climbs, to the grassy areas to the beach and the river, which makes it challenging. I find it just never lets up, you are always having to push all the way. There's no recovery as such."

Every year the competition was getting tougher, with more starters in those longer events but for her, the biggest thrill was seeing more and more young ones coming through, especially the girls. "It's not too technical, but hard enough if you are going for it. It's a great race to give kids a taste of off-road mountain biking. I'd love to see even more give it ago," she said.

Another great ambassador for the event has been Commonwealth Games gold medalist Anton Cooper. While it remains to be seen whether or not the North Canterbury rider will be among the starting lineup this year due to his busy international season competing on the elite UCI Mountain Bike World Cup tour as part of the New Trek Factory team, he's been one of the event's biggest supporters since first riding it as a young teenager. After the 2015 event he referred to it as one of his favourites "...because it is one of the few in the world which combines young kids racing alongside

elite competitors - there is no better way to get kids involved in the sport of mountain biking."

And that's something the organisers are keen to see continue in 2017.

Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge committee member Anna Jemmott said they were hoping to build on the youth participation this year, encouraging more children from more schools around Mid Canterbury and the wider Canterbury area to take part. "Last year Tinwald School came along with a really big group, we had a good group come up from Waimate, and we encouraged the Longbeach School children to compete wearing their uniforms and we'd love to see even more give it a go this year."

She said it's a great way for young people to participate, challenge themselves and have fun, all whilst contributing back to the youth in the local community as the money raised supports Longbeach School or other youth initiatives through the Hinds and District Lions, like the fabulous new playground in Hinds.

As an added incentive McDonalds had generously come on board with providing certificates,

vouchers and drink bottles for all youth taking part, she said.

They have also made a slight change to the programme with the 5km run/walk becoming a fun event, with the focus on participation where participants can choose to walk or run, or maybe even dress up in a wacky costume.

Once again, the start/finish point will be located at the historic Longbeach Estate with the tracks largely the same as last year giving competitors unprecedented access to some wonderful farmland with a vista of the vast Pacific Ocean.

"The feedback we received from last year on the tracks was really positive. People really enjoyed going through the streams and as long as conditions were right this year, we see no reason to make any major changes. Members of the Hinds and District Lions had already been out working on at the track. Any final decisions on the track would be made closer to the event," said Anna.

It's amazing to think that since its humble beginnings in 2007 the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge has raised in excess of \$200,000 during its 10-year history.

Originally proposed as a motorcycle event, it was with great foresight that the Longbeach School parent-body and Hinds and District Lions decided to establish the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge.

At the time both organisations were on the lookout for new and exciting fundraising ideas, and together they came up with a winning formula with the Longbeach school parent body handling everything from catering and registrations, to marketing and the set-up of the race site itself, while the Lions members take care of the track.

It started with just two mountain bike events—35km and 23km—which remain a mainstay on the schedule, but gradually more and more events have been added opening it up to a wider audience.

Now competitors can also take part in a 12km family mountain bike ride, while walkers and runners are also catered for with the 21km off-road half marathon, 12km recreational run or scenic walk and a fun 5km run/walk.

Anna said the organising committee was extraordinarily grateful to the sponsor family behind the event, most of which had backed it since the start, as well as their amazing landowners who were prepared to throw their gates open and allow access to their paddocks, laneways and coastal boundaries for the one-off annual event.

Early bird entries close on September 30 with a bike up for grabs from Paul Wylie Cyclerama to the lucky draw winner.

Dental implants & Over Dentures



What is an implant?

A dental implant serves to replace a missing tooth or retain a denture. It is only a few millimetres long, the shape and surface is carefully engineered so that bone grows to the surface firmly anchoring it in the jaw.

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Your Dentist will do a comprehensive examination of your teeth, including an x-ray, and determine whether you are a suitable candidate. If implants are a viable option for you, your Dentist will then prepare a treatment plan, together with cost projections, and discuss this with you.

Once the implant has been placed, a temporary healing 'cap' will be placed over it. Time is allowed for the site to recover from the surgery. The final restoration, porcelain crown will not be done until the dentist is satisfied that the implant has integrated to the bone. It is the same scenario for an over denture once the bone has integrated to the implant. Then the denture can be engaged to the implants so that it is stable and better retained. The average time for integration in the lower jaw is 3 months in the upper jaw in can be 5 months. Your dentist will be able to give you an approximation of the time your particular case might take.

Hours:

Monday 8.00am – 7.00pm

Tuesday 8am – 7.00pm

Wednesday 8.00am – 5.00pm

Thursday 8.00am – 7.00pm

Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm

Saturday 8.30am – 1.00pm



Changing the way we manage our contractors



Using contractors on our farms or in any business is a daily occurrence—we usually just hire someone to do what we don't know (or want!) to do ourselves.

WORDS BY JANE FOWLES, COMPLIANCE PARTNERS

Contractors can be anyone from the shearing gang, to the guy you've had come and do your spraying for the last 10 years. Under the new Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 there is a much larger emphasis on the management of this contractor relationship.

"The most effective way to manage this duty is by working together..."

As the farmer, or the PCBU, you must do what you can, within your influence and control, to provide a safe and healthy environment for all workers entering the farm or workplace. This extends to contractors and sub-contractors to ensure they do not cause harm to your workers or themselves, or anyone else while undertaking their work. This duty, along with the contractor businesses operating on your farm, is termed an 'overlapping duty'. The most effective way to manage this duty is by working together—consult, cooperate, and coordinate the activities on farm or in the workplace. Talking to everyone involved

can help to reach a common understanding and establish clear roles, responsibilities and actions in relation to health and safety. Working together can also help identify and prevent gaps when managing health and safety risks for workers. Remember, the goal is that everyone goes home safe at the end of the day from your farm or business—no matter who pays them or how long they're working there for.

Contractor Management is about deciding who can, and will, influence and control what aspect of the job. These aspects are influenced and controlled in varying degrees between you and your contractors. You and your contractor can control and influence:

- The workplace or the farm—who is control of the workplace and what happens there?
- The work—who is in control of how the work is carried out?
- The worker—who has control over the workers?

What are some practical things you can do to begin to improve contractor health and safety?

- Choose wisely when you're selecting someone to work at your workplace, choose based on health and safety reputation as well. Request evidence, if required, to ensure contractors are qualified, appropriately certified, licensed, knowledgeable and skilled to complete the work safely;

- Build long term relationships with your contractors that support health and safety;
- Include contractors in your health and safety reporting data;
- Frequently communicate to your contractors your health and safety expectations. Ensure all Contractors are taken through an induction process to ensure they know about your farm risks and expectations. Give information on procedures for reporting risks in the workplace, or that result from the work being done, methods for reporting accidents and incidents, responsibilities for notifiable events, information about the workplace or procedures, such as known risks, emergency procedures and where to find first aid facilities;
- Intervene if you have concerns about health and safety;
- Plan by thinking through every stage of the job, and recognising how the work could affect all workers, and even the public;
- Identify the risks that need managing on the job and decide who and what will control each risk - including the risks the contractor will create;
- Ensure your timelines and budget constraints don't jeopardise the health and safety of the workers;
- Recognise good performance across everyone and provide reward. Morning tea shoutouts are pretty well received.

Simply put, it makes good business sense to take on the responsibility of the safety of everyone doing business with you or for you.

"...everyone goes home safe at the end of the day..."

You hold the position to lift the health and safety performance of your contractors—ensuring they are making safety just as much of a priority as you. And, as always, Jane Fowles at Compliance Partners is happy to discuss this further for your farm or business. Feel free to get in touch on 021 942 150 to discuss further. Think smart before you start!

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Co-op News



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- Honda Country Ashburton
- Jeff Marshall Motorcycles (Suzuki) Ashburton
- Timaru Yamaha
- Young Motors (Suzuki) Oamaru

Use your Ruralco Card to purchase new ATVs or Motorbikes from any of these Ruralco Card Suppliers and the charge will appear on your Ruralco statement for payment on the 20th of the month following the purchase.

Please check the Ruralco Website for new suppliers who will be offering this service in the future.

Repairs and renovations complete

Ashburton's Ruralco Gift & Homeware department has returned home to its newly renovated store on Burnett Street. Earthquake strengthening and repair work has taken several months to complete and saw the store relocate off-site during part of this process. Work is now completed and the revamped shop is back in action. If you haven't already been in to take a look, make the time to see the changes and do a spot of shopping. We would like to take this opportunity to again thank our customers for their patience and to apologise for any inconveniences experienced.

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Book an on-farm consultation with Ruralco Seed to discuss your spring crop and pasture requirements by 31 August and go in the draw to win 1 of 3 Stihl RE 109 Water blasters worth \$495 each.

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To book a consultation contact the team today on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

BONUS FROM SEED FORCE

Buy your SF Brigadier Fodder Beet by 31 August and go in the draw to win 1 of 3 Stihl line trimmers worth \$375 each, so talk to the Ruralco Seed team today about how SF Brigadier Fodder Beet can work with your system.

Are you with the best energy provider for your farm?

When is the last time you took a close look at your electricity accounts? Is your energy provider offering you the best pricing solution for your farm? Do you need help reviewing your energy plans? Ruralco Energy is here to make managing your energy accounts easy by continuing to work with our partners – Meridian, Genesis Energy, Nova Energy and Kea Energy – to ensure you get the best offers available to suit your individual needs.

Contact Ruralco Energy Account Manager, Tracey Gordon, today on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) to get an energy price comparison on your accounts.

Streamline your accounts

Do you use Cash Manager or Xero accounting software for your farming operation? Want to reduce the amount of time spent in front of the computer inputting your accounts? Ruralco is here to help. We can arrange the export of your Ruralco account to both Cash Manager and Xero, greatly reducing the amount of time you'll spend processing your accounts each month. To find out more or to set up a solution to best suit your accounting needs, contact the Customer Services team on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

Gift giving made easy

Have you got a wedding coming up this spring or summer? Check out Ruralco's Online Wedding Registry and find out how we can make gift giving easy. The registry automatically updates as purchases are made making shopping especially easy for out of town guests. To book a time to set up your registry or to find out more, visit us online at theregistry@ruralco.co.nz or telephone us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or 03 307 5100 or pop in to one of our stores to find out more.



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Runner Up – William Johnson, age 8



Charlotte McDowell



Emily Hope



Fleur Kingsbury



Suzie Woodward



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