

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2018

Passion driving
force behind new
breed

Christmas with
Crozier's Turkeys

Leading our
co-operative

Ruralco Supplier
Awards—recognising
excellence

From the Group CEO



2017 drawing to a close

With Christmas just around the corner, it's timely one of our feature articles takes a closer look at a Mid Canterbury turkey operation which has become a bit of an institution.

Ashburton-based Crozier's Turkeys has a history spanning more than 50 years and has long been synonymous with producing quality free range turkey for customers nationwide. While the Crozier family no longer

runs the business, new operators Kyle and Monique Smith are committed to retaining its founding principles and share with us their journey so far.

Another Mid Canterbury family, this time based in the district's foothills, share their passion for sheep and in particular, a new breed being trialled. Blair and Sara Gallagher are passionate about the New Zealand sheep industry, despite declining confidence in the sector. Over the last three years they have been part of a joint breeding programme aimed at establishing the Beltex sheep breed in New Zealand. It's the first new sheep breed to be introduced to New Zealand for almost a decade and the Gallagher's believe it could be a game-changer for our sheep farmers.

In this issue of Real Farmer we also get the chance to learn a bit more about the people who sit around the board tables of ATS (Ruralco's parent cooperative) and United Wheat Growers. Our ATS directors are professional and diverse by way of age, gender and background, and collectively they bring a wealth of experience, diversity and balance to our organisation, ensuring it is well placed moving forward to meet the challenges likely to be encountered within the rural supplies business.

United Wheat Growers has been a quiet backstop for growers, providing peace of mind and fostering strong industry links for 30 years. Its four directors, Brian Leadley of Ashburton, Syd Worsfold of Greendale, Michael Tayler of Winchester, and Waimate's Guy Wigley, provide a valuable and relevant cropping perspective to the Board. It's also an organisation Ruralco values and supports by way of sponsorship and promotion of its annual wheat growing competition.

Valued partnerships are also a feature of Ruralco's annual Supplier Awards, which recognise excellence in a number of areas. This year's winners, Stocker Solutions and Neumann's Tyres share their delight in being named Supreme Supplier of the Year and winner of the Members' Choice Award respectively. They certainly have reason to celebrate.

As 2017 draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to offer a heartfelt thanks to all cardholders, suppliers and staff for their wonderful support over the year. While we know farming doesn't stop for holidays, we wish you a happy and safe festive season wherever you may be or whatever you are doing—and if you do manage to head away, don't forget to take your Ruralco Card on holiday!

Rob Sharkie
027 801 9929
robert.sharkie@ruralco.co.nz

RealFarmer

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RURALCO NZ LIMITED
PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740
0800 RURALNZ (787 256)
www.ruralco.co.nz

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES:
Our team welcome your contributions, enquiries and letters.
Please email to:
marketing@ruralco.co.nz

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:
Please contact the Marketing Department on:
Tel: 0800 RURALNZ (787 256);
marketing@ruralco.co.nz

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CONTRIBUTORS

Anita Body
Annie Studholme
Richard Rennie

PHOTOGRAPHY

Amy Piper
Annie Studholme
Barbara Lovelock

TECHNICAL ARTICLES

AgriSeeds
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz
Ballance Agri-Nutrients
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Compliance Partners
Tel 0800 249 7233
info@cp.org.nz
www.cp.org.nz

DairyNZ
Tel 0800 4 324 7969
info@dairynz.co.nz
www.dairynz.co.nz

Deer Industry NZ
Tel 04 473 4500
info@deernz.org
www.deernz.org

Nick Pyke, CEO
FAR - The Foundation for Arable Research
Tel 03 345 5783
far@far.org.nz
www.far.org.nz

Gallagher
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Horticulture NZ
Mike Chapman, CEO
Horticulture New Zealand
Tel 04 472 3795
mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz
www.hortnz.co.nz

Irrigation NZ
Tel 03 341 2225
admin@irrigationnz.co.nz
www.irrigationnz.co.nz

Meridian
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Tracey Gordon
Ruralco Energy Account Manager
Tel 0800 787 256
Tracey.Gordon@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Don Joseph
Ruralco Fuel Account Manager
Tel 0800 787 256
Don.Joseph@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

SealesWinslow
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Skellerup
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Ian Hodge
VetEnt Riverside Ashburton
Tel 03 308 2321
riverside@vetent.co.nz
www.vetent.co.nz

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Adam Gage & Hamish Gallagher with the prized Beltex offspring

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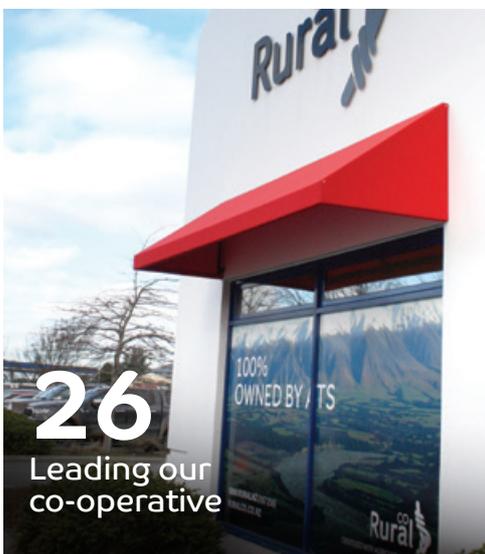
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Passion driving force behind new breed

At a time when sheep numbers are at an all-time low and amid continued decline in industry confidence, one man's passion for breeding and improving bloodlines is the driving force behind a new sheep breed being trialled in the Mid Canterbury foothills.

WORDS BY ANNIE STUDHOLME, IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME & AMY PIPER



Mid Canterbury foothills farmers Blair and Sara Gallagher are passionate about the New Zealand sheep industry. For decades their Rangiatea Perendale Sheep Stud, near Mt Somers, has led the way in Perendale breeding by focusing heavily on selecting the best possible genetics available to enhance bottom line profitability in a commercial setting.

For the past three years they have been working on a joint breeding programme with Donald Morrison of Rosedale Growbulk in Waikaka and now with the help of former Invermay head genetic scientist Dr Jock Allison and farm advisor John Tavendale, they have taken it a step further importing some purebred Beltex embryos from the United Kingdom in the hope of establishing the new breed in New Zealand.

It's the first new sheep breed to be introduced to New Zealand in almost a decade following in the footsteps of East Friesians in 1992 (released from quarantine four years later), Texel in 1990 and Charollais in 2009, and with the Beltex's high meat producing capabilities, Blair is convinced the double-muscling Texel off-shoot from Belgium could be a game-changer for New Zealand sheep farmers.

Blair first spotted the Beltex sheep breed more than a decade ago, but until the Ministry of Primary Industry (MPI), now known as the Ministry of Agriculture, changed its protocols regarding the importation of sheep embryos from the United Kingdom without quarantine being required, the whole exercise was cost prohibitive.

"Basically we tried to do it 12 years ago. We went through the process, but with three years of quarantine and a likely \$3 million bill, we lost interest," he says.

Quite by chance, Blair and Sara met up with Jock in 2016 and he informed them the protocols had changed and asked whether or not they were still keen to pursue the idea. The Gallagher's jumped at the prospect and 10 days later they were on a plane to the UK.

"The potential contribution to lamb carcass confirmation and increased meat yield particularly in the greater eye muscle area and muscling in the leg is huge," says Blair. "The real advantage is that we don't have to get them to a heavier carcass to get around the ideal 18/19kg lamb. They don't have to be big lambs to achieve that. There is just nothing like a Beltex for carcass conformation.

"In the UK, they can't keep up with the demand of Beltex cross lambs. Butchers love them and they are exporting whole carcasses into the European chiller market, with prices consistently fetching a 15-20% premium for Beltex lambs."

Having identified one of the top studs in the UK, the first Beltex embryos were collected late 2016 from leased rams and ewes from Kevin and Rachel Buckle's Broxty Beltex stud in Stephen, Cumbria.

Back in New Zealand, the embryos were transplanted into four-year-old Perendale recipient ewes in March, while they also imported Beltex semen and artificially inseminated a number of stud Suffolk, Poll Dorset and Perendale ewes.



ABOVE: Hamish, Sara & Blair Gallagher in front of the Rangiatea Homestead

"We lambed them one month earlier than we usually lamb. One reason was so that the ewe lambs will be mature enough to take embryos next year and that the ram lambs will be mature enough for an on-farm sale next March, but logistically it also meant they were out of the way before the rest of our stud sheep started lambing," explains Blair.

They also opted to lamb them indoors purely because of the capital investment. "We were trying to eliminate all risk and get as big survival as we could in this first year."

For selecting genetics going forward, Blair says it's been crucial to know as much as possible about these lambs. Every lamb was weighed and recorded at birth along with any relevant birth data. The purebred Beltex lambs weighed between 3.5–6kg, while the crossbreds ranged from 4–7kg. Once they were a couple of days old, the ewes and lambs went out to pasture. At the next weigh in the crossbreds (born three weeks later) were still heavier than the purebreds at the same age because of their larger frames. Weights

would also be taken at weaning. Notably, the pronounced muscling the Beltex is known for is not apparent at birth but starts to develop shortly afterwards.

The problems experienced with lambing purebreds has been more to do with being born indoors and feeding, and those problems don't seem to occur with the crossbreds, explains Blair. They recorded no real issues.

In all, they transplanted 180 embryos from five different sire lines, but the success rate was only 37% leaving just 55 purebred lambs. "It was a disappointing take with the embryo transfer, but we can't put it down to any particular reason," says Blair.

They were hoping for a better success next time round. Brimming with enthusiasm for the new breed, the partners had travelled back to the UK selecting stock for their next embryo import before the first lambs had even hit the ground.



By the time the second phase of the breeding programme is complete next autumn, Blair estimates it would have cost them close to \$1 million. "It certainly hasn't been straight forward by any means. It's expensive and without Jock Allison's involvement I doubt we probably would have been able to do it all. We have tried to use the best genetics possible, but it comes at a cost. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it, but I love the challenge and can see the potential for the whole New Zealand sheep industry."

If the breed's launch at the Canterbury A&P show last month is anything to go by, the Gallaghers may be onto a winner.

"It was absolutely overwhelming," says Blair. "The feedback we have had has been amazing; much better than we had anticipated."

Next March they plan to sell the first of their New Zealand bred stock with an on-farm sale at Rangiatea with all the crossbred ram lambs going under the hammer as well as some of the purebred ram lambs.

Despite the massive amount of extra work, the Beltex NZ project has fitted seamlessly into the Gallagher's Rangiatea farming operation.

At an altitude of 530m at the homestead, Rangiatea can be climatically challenging with long winters and regular snowfalls. Covering 1,100 hectares with a mix of foothills country and flats, they carry 9,500 stock units. It's made up of 430 predominantly Angus with (on average) 160 two-year-old Waagu cattle bought in for fattening and 7,000 sheep which includes 4,700 ewes including

800 SIL recorded Perendale stud ewes and 110 registered cheviots.

First registered in 1971 with its foundation ewes coming from Massey University's Flock 1, Rangiatea has long been recognised as one of the country's leading Perendale studs. Last year its sire rams were judged to have the best maternal genetics for lamb survival, based on figures supplied to national genetics organisation Sheep Improvement Limited (SIL).

Following in the footsteps of his father, Colin, Blair has placed a huge importance on performance running a tough selection policy, only retaining the top 30-35% of ram and ewe hoggets from the stud flock for breeding and selling with a strong emphasis placed on sheep type, structural soundness and conformation. They've also sourced the best possible genetics to make the most desirable improvements. Their sheep are all subjected to intense grazing systems with high stocking rates.

On average their stud ewes consistently lamb at 150-160%, with mating weights recorded at between 65-68kg, while their commercial flock achieving rates of 130-140% on the hills. However, in contrast to many other hill country farmers, the Gallaghers have more success lambing twin-bearing commercial ewes set-stocked on warmer sheltered hill country, with as many single-bearing ewes as possible in paddocks in a bid to sell as many of the single lambs at weaning. Lambing starts with their terminals from September 15, followed by the hill ewes from September 30, and lastly, hoggets from October 5.

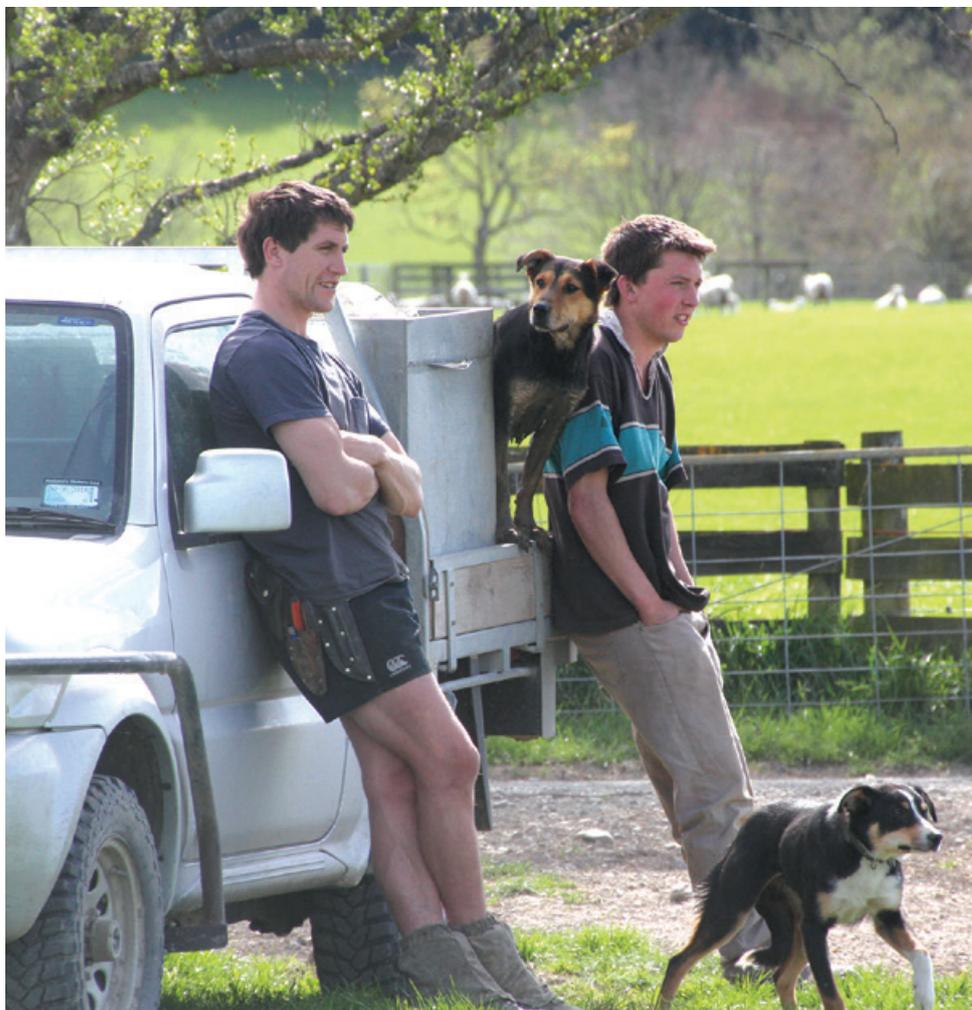
Although hogget mating doesn't work for everyone, the Gallaghers have found it a crucial part of overall profitability. "It's pretty hard to put \$50-70k on the bottom-line anywhere else," says Blair. "We have tried everything, but we've found the survival when crossed with the cheviot tends to be the best. The lambs are small and vigorous and we don't tend to get so many prolapses."

For Blair and Sara's son Hamish, 23, who returned home at the start of January, the Beltex project has been a massive introduction to farming.

After leaving school, Hamish completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Commerce at Lincoln University before heading off overseas where he has been working and travelling. Initially his parents gave him until age 25 to return home to the family farm, but he came back early specifically to help get Beltex NZ up and running. "In reality I probably would have given it a couple more years, but with the Beltex project it was perfect timing. It's definitely been a huge learning experience, and it would have been hard to get up to speed if I hadn't been here from the start."

Hamish was really excited about their future. "Their backend is pretty amazing. No other sheep in New Zealand can do that," he says.

This time they are using stock from three different studs from the middle of England and southern Scotland. They are also looking at taking semen from the best ram hoggets here and from some in the UK to really ramp up its artificial insemination programme as well. "The rams we have selected this time are not related to any ewes, so we have really broadened our genetic base. Hopefully we won't need to go back again and we'll have enough genetics to build up the numbers," he says.



LEFT: Adam Gage & Hamish Gallagher take the new Beltex challenges in their pride

TOP: The beltex structure is pretty impressive, especially up close in the yards

On returning Hamish has become the fifth generation to farm in the area. Blair's father grew up at Brackley at Montalto. He later farmed at Ealing where he had a large merino stud. With the prospect of irrigation in the 1950s with the Mayfield Hinds Irrigation scheme, Colin dreamt of returning to the foothills. "He wasn't that keen on irrigation so started looking for a higher rainfall property and bought this place," explains Blair.

Back then the farm ran 1,200 half bred ewes and about 30 cows. It had never really seen fertiliser, had little fencing, the homestead was quite run down and the garden was almost non-existent. Having brought his merino ewes with him from Ealing it quickly became obvious to Colin they wouldn't work with the higher rainfall, so he crossed them with Romneys and later crossed that progeny with the Perendale which forms the basis of the Rangiatea flock today.

Blair bought into the farm when he was 28 years old and took over the remainder when his father died in 1988.

The garden for which Rangiatea is also known was created by Blair's mother, Margaret. An avid gardener, Margaret spent years establishing an extensive garden surrounding the homestead with woodland walks, a mass of daffodils and bluebells in spring, colourful rhododendrons and azaleas from mid-October. The garden has wonderful autumn colours, particularly the maples.

While she never set out to open the garden to the public, the garden just evolved, a legacy Blair and Sara have continued and extended over the years adding plantings of continual flowering roses at their best during the summer months overlooking a large pond, farmland and views of Mt Somers. It now hosts regular groups and visitors by arrangement.

As an aside to their farming operation Blair and Sara also run Rangiatea Jewellery, making use of the wonderful agate deposits found on the property left some 90 million years ago when nearby Mt Somers was an active volcano spewing hot silica-based liquids. Geologists had long known there was agate in the area. Blair discovered it and in doing so launched a



passion that has spanned decades. He started manufacturing jewellery during his 20s using expert bead makers in Hong Kong and when Hamish came along together Blair and Sara ramped the business up even further.

Over the years they have extended the range of polished agates and jewellery, transforming an old tack room adjacent the homestead into a quaint

gallery where hundreds of examples of the stones are displayed.

In addition to the agate jewellery they also import paua shell, Mother of Pearl and pink mussel shell, blue pearl shell (nautilus shell) and freshwater pearls set in quality sterling silver. Most recently they have added a new range featuring white sapphires in rose gold and matted silver settings.

You'll find them at most local fetes and shows. Their jewellery is also sold to visiting groups by arrangement and at some retail outlets. While it's something completely different to farming, both Blair and Sara really enjoy it. "We have met some wonderful people over the years. It takes us off the farm and gives us another interest, but it also sort of involves the farm," says Sara.

Although at the moment Blair's passion for agate is taking a backseat, while he and Hamish put everything into establishing the Beltex breed in New Zealand.

LEFT: Rangiatea is also known for the beautiful garden around the homestead, created by Blair's mother Margaret

TOP: Blair Gallagher works on a joint breeding programme with Donald Morrison, Jock Allison & John Tavendale

MIDDLE: The purebred Beltex embryo's were transplanted into four-year-old Perendale recipient ewes

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FUEL

Holiday season a time for resting and refuelling

After a tough season farming, summer time brings the opportunity to grab a few days away from the daily demands catching up with family and friends, hopefully at a favourite beach or lake with plenty of sunshine. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

The Ruralco Fuel team have some advice for getting away, while also keeping things working at home on the farm.

Getting away fully fuelled

Depending on weather and traffic, going on a journey can be part of the fun in any holiday. Ruralco has taken some of the hassle out of the journey, thanks to the convenience of the Ruralco Card for purchasing fuel, and a strong network of Mobil and Allied fuel outlets around the country.

The Ruralco Fuel team have worked hard to negotiate a good deal before you even leave home this summer, with several 25c a litre deals off fuel purchased in Ashburton leading up to Christmas and New Year, at Allied and Mobil stations.

This comes on top of the usual Ruralco cardholders' discount of 12c a litre, and there are no limits on the amount of fuel purchased with these deals.

Keeping the card handy will pay all summer, and the stations that accept Ruralco Card can be easily tracked down either through the Allied Petroleum website or through their easily downloaded app.

Keep your Ruralco Card handy as a sure-fire guarantee for purchasing fuel at any Mobil station within New Zealand.

Keeping the farm running over summer

Meantime back home, if staff and contractors are likely to be still working on the farm in your absence, be sure to advise Ruralco Fuel about any additional top-ups of the farms' bulk storage tanks you may require.

Deliveries can be scheduled throughout the holiday period to ensure any work that needs to be done over that time will not stop short from lack of fuel.

Keeping farm bulk tanks compliant is now more important than ever, with greater health and safety emphasis upon their standards, and the new Hazardous Substances rules taking effect from December 1 this year.

Ruralco Fuel will be visiting farm sites and helping with labelling and assisting with compliance issues for fuel storage sites.

That help extends to also being able to offer bulk fuel tanks for storage including lease-to-own options along with other flexible payment options billed directly through your Ruralco account.

Contact Don or Melinda at Ruralco to discuss your options for keeping the farm fully fuelled.

Wrong fuel? No panic

Hopefully one experience you don't get to have this summer as you fill up for some sun soaked days away is that sick realisation you have just put petrol in your diesel tank, or vice versa.

In the panicky moments after making a mistake made by 150,000 motorists a year in the United Kingdom, the best move is to take a deep breath, and go nowhere. Putting diesel into a petrol tank is a problem, but petrol into a diesel is worse, and not starting the engine will ensure the two fuels do not mix into your vehicle's engine system.

The petrol acts as a solvent, reducing lubrication and damaging the diesel fuel pump as metal components experience increased friction.

Meantime other components of the fuel system not compatible, such as rubber and silicon components could also experience damage.

The best step is to arrange for the fuel to be pumped out, and some garages have pumps for such a purpose, or through the AA Roadside Service.

Typically, once all the petrol is out and diesel added again, the car should run fine.

Ruralco secures good deals on oil

Thanks to Ruralco's strong relationship with our lubricant supplier, the team have secured very special prices on Mobil lubricants and exhaust fluids, in both 208L drum and 20L packs.

As the busy harvest season ramps up these packs are available through November and December and meet standards for all major tractor brands including John Deere, New Holland and the major farm equipment companies.

Securing these packs now can pay, thanks to a weaker Kiwi dollar pushing up fuel prices.

The Ruralco Fuel team can also provide oil recommendations for all farming equipment.

Inoperable fuel cards

The team at Ruralco have received some reports of cards not working at pumps, particularly truck stops and at pump terminals. If this happens, please take note of the following and contact Don or Melinda for assistance:

- Transaction time
- Card type
- Pump used
- OPT (message at pump)

Weak Kiwi \$ pushes up fuel costs

The NZ dollar took a hit post-election that it

still has not recovered from, and at US\$68c has coincided with the barrel price lifting to US\$63. Nationally petrol and diesel prices have risen as a result. Diesel is up 27c a litre to \$1.47/l and 91 petrol up from \$1.88 to \$2.13/l, the highest prices in three years.

These price rises make using your Ruralco or Ruralco Mobilcard even more appealing, whether on business or holiday, with savings often accumulating to as much as 40c a litre.

Holiday fuel sites

Several new sites have opened recently. Mobil Twizel will be in hot demand for holiday makers with more in the pipeline over the next few months. Keep an eye on www.ruralco.co.nz for updates.



Don Joseph
027 839 7351



Melinda Driscoll
027 449 9705

Ford



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Ruralco Cardholders are eligible for special discounts at participating Ford Dealerships when presenting their Ruralco Card. Like the number one selling vehicle, the Ford Ranger, or our latest mid-size SUV, the Ford Escape, we have a vehicle to suit all your requirements.

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Go Further

Reduce costs, be compliant & increase production

“If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is” the saying goes. But that was before technology, cloud data, and ReGen Ltd, combined to deliver targeted recommendations into the palm of your hand, helping you optimise irrigation and reduce power usage.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY REGEN LTD, IN ASSOCIATION WITH MERIDIAN



Meridian Energy is pleased to introduce ReGen to its customers. ReGen is known for innovative services that bring the science and technology needed to farm sustainably right to the farmer's pocket—through their smartphone. Knowing how farmers operate day to day, Regen packages up relevant science with farm-specific data to generate daily decision support recommendations for water irrigation, effluent irrigation and nitrogen use.

Meridian and ReGen know that farming has to keep evolving to meet the changing values and needs of our consumers, as well as the changing regulatory environment. Today that means that we have to reduce our environmental footprint and create more value for each unit of output—milk, meat, crops or wool.

Significant power saving

Power use is a major cost for farmers and through its partnership with ReGen, Meridian can point to the ReGen Water service to reduce energy use through optimal irrigation. Using ReGen to only use irrigation when required reduces the power bills substantially. In many cases between 5–10% per season which equates to over \$10,000 in a large scale operation.

Compliance

Good Management Practice and Farm Environment Plans are part of everyday farming now, and together Meridian and ReGen are committed to enabling farmers to be as efficient as possible with the use of electricity, water and nitrogen.

The Regen services also ensures compliance targets around water use and nitrogen use can be met, measured and reported on, and all directly to your mobile phone or PC.

ReGen Water

Making sure the right amount of water goes on at the right time is the key for irrigation efficiency and production. Efficiency is essential to remain compliant, keep power costs down and to optimise pasture production.

After a quick set up of the relevant hardware and data calibration, the ReGen Water app calculates every day what the optimum irrigation depth is for each of the next 5 days based on science and the latest technology from ReGen. ReGen provides a customised recommendation for each irrigation block, also taking forecasted rainfall into consideration, and data is recorded automatically and presented in an easy to follow format, on a smart phone or PC.

ReGen Nitrogen

Based on current soil moisture and temperature data from your farm, the ReGen Nitrogen app calculates the likely response rate (kg DM/ha) from a planned nitrogen fertiliser application and what price this would translate to in c/kgDM. The farmer is better informed to decide if using nitrogen is the cheapest source of feed at that time.

By introducing ReGen Water to customers, Meridian wants them to be able to reduce their power bill while not compromising crop growth. All the while farmer's can be confident

they are farming sustainably and can prove this as required—to the local Regional Council or to the valuable consumer of their product.

To find out more about ReGen Water, Nitrogen or Effluent contact your local Meridian Account Manager on 0800 496 444 or call Bridgit Hawkins on 027 411 9336 or bridgit.hawkins@nzregen.co.nz. More product information is available on our website www.nzregen.co.nz.

All Ruralco customers who have their electricity with Meridian are eligible for a free no obligation farm assessment and those who sign up for ReGen Water within the month of January receive three months of the Nitrogen service for FREE.



Not already a Meridian customer?

Joining is easy. Find out more by calling 0800 787 256 or at www.ruralco.co.nz/meridian

Christmas with Crozier's Turkeys

A desire to produce a premium quality product as close to nature intended remains the hallmark of Ashburton-based Crozier's Turkeys.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME



For more than fifty years Crozier's Turkeys has been synonymous with producing quality 100% free range turkey, catering for those festive traditionalists who rely on turkey as a key ingredient of their Christmas fare.

And while Philip and Judith Crozier no longer run the business, new operators Kyle and Monique Smith, together with daughters Isla (5) and Ruby (3), are committed to retaining the very principles the business was founded on all those years ago.

Having built the business up from nothing, the Croziers approached Kyle and Monique about taking over the reins in a lease-to-own arrangement in 2015.

For Kyle, it was a dream come true. He'd long harboured dreams of being out on his own, running a poultry farm, but until the Croziers came along that seemed a long way off. "It was really a win-win," he explains. "I was looking for something else and Philip's free-range philosophy fitted in so well with how I wanted to go; and, Philip and Judith didn't want to see their years of hard work disappear. They have helped us immensely. We couldn't have done it without them."

Kyle's love affair for the large domesticated game bird, which is originally native to North America, developed as a child growing up on a lifestyle block at Leithfield, near Amberley, where his parents ran a flock of non-commercial turkeys keeping friends and neighbours in good supply with lean turkey meat.

After leaving school he initially worked on sheep and cropping farms before landing a position at a nearby turkey breeding unit where he climbed up the ranks to manager of the hatchery, which was followed up by time spent working on another



large poultry farm producing turkey, duck, quail and pheasant.

While he enjoyed what he was doing, he and wife, Monique, wanted more for their young family, so when the opportunity with the Croziers arose, they didn't hesitate to pack up their lives in Rangiora and move south to Ashburton.

Kyle says the opportunity to have control of the whole process from breeding, hatching, growing and producing their own birds right through to doing all the processing themselves was a huge attraction for him. But admittedly he had a lot to learn when it came to the processing side having to complete specialist courses in anti-mortem, post-mortem and food safety to be up with Ministry of Primary Industry (MPI) protocols. "Having always been on the farming side, the

processing side has been a bit of an eye-opener for me. Philip's help initially was invaluable," he says.

Changes were also afoot for wife Monique who traded in a successful career in beauty therapy and hairdressing for doing all the businesses sales and marketing, all while being a stay-at-home mum to Isla and Ruby.

"It's a big change from hanging out with the ladies to doing all the office work, but I am really enjoying it. I could sell hair and beauty products that I believed in, so to sell truly free-range turkeys wasn't too different," says Monique.

But while it's incredibly busy, the Smiths know they have made the right decision for their family. "We knew it wouldn't be easy, especially coming in with nothing, but we are getting there. In spite of the hard work and long hours, it's been a great lifestyle change with Monique and the girls able to be more involved. It's been so good for our family. I get to spend more time with them; that's probably been the biggest bonus. The girls love collecting the eggs and see the baby poults on hatch days, and Isla also likes going down to the farmer's market to help Monique on the stall," says Kyle.

Just weeks away from their second Christmas at the helm, the Smiths are looking forward to a well-earned break after the Christmas rush. Almost 90 per cent of the turkey farmed in New Zealand every year is eaten at Christmas, and they are currently "crazy" busy fulfilling orders up and down the country.

While they will have some fresh turkey available this Christmas, much of what's been grown on the farm this summer won't hit dinner plates until next Christmas. It seems kind of crazy, but to maintain its truly free-range reputation Crozier's Turkeys birds are only produced during the warmer months, explains Kyle.

"It's very seasonal. Here they live in a paddock and have access to shelter sheds (inside) when they

processing side has been a bit of an eye-opener for me. Philip's help initially was invaluable," he says.

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want it; they don't live in a shed and have access to the outside. For animal welfare reasons, if we tried to produce birds in winter they would end up spending most of their lives locked in a shed, due to the cold and wet weather conditions over the winter months, and that's not what we're about. We are definitely aiming to have the best product quality wise."

Set on 14 hectares at Dromore, each flock enjoys paddocks of more than 1ha each where they are completely free to roam and forage for natural foods such as grubs, bugs and grass seeds in addition to a diet of natural grains, most of which are sourced locally and blended in their on-site mill. Shelter sheds are fitted with roosts so they can sleep as they would in the wild, as well as sheltering from adverse weather.

Because they are not farmed intensively, Kyle says they don't tend to get the same disease issues as those farmed under intensive practices meaning they don't need to include unnecessary antibiotics and hormones in their feed. Instead they rely on natural probiotics and essential oils and the harsh Canterbury frosts to control any harmful micro-organisms present in the outdoor environment.



At Crozier's Turkeys even the breeder hens spend most of their lives outside, which helps with broody management, explains Kyle.

In a bid to bring the hens onto the lay earlier they are put through a false winter using lights. Breeding occurs via artificial insemination weekly during this season. This year the first eggs were collected at the end of July and they are collected right through to February. Eggs have a 28-day incubation period. Once hatched baby turkeys (poults) remain in the brooding sheds under heaters until fully feathered at about four-six weeks of age, before being transferred to the paddocks. Processing starts on the smaller birds at 11 weeks old with the tops up to 18 weeks of age, with it done using organically approved methods of sterilisation by hand to ensure excellent quality control. The growing season typically goes through to April.

Christmas remains Crozier's Turkeys busiest time with their whole turkey's available in all good butcheries and specialist stores nationwide including the local Ruralco branches. "We have purposely stayed away from supplying supermarkets. We are a premium product and we want it to stay that way," says Monique.

ABOVE: Christmas is the busiest time of the year for Kyle and Monique Smith as they try to fill orders up and down the country

BELOW: Baby turkeys (poults) remain in the brooding sheds until they are fully-feathered (4-6 weeks)

In addition, they also sell a wide range of other turkey products from their weekly stall at the Ashburton Farmers' Market from October including mince, breasts, medallions, crumbed schnitzel, wings and drums, which are slowly becoming more popular as a healthier option, but it's unlikely it will replace chicken as New Zealand's number one source of protein any time soon.

"In reality, if turkey was like chicken and was feeding everyone, we wouldn't be able to produce it like we do. If we needed more land, I would get it so we can produce more, but I'm not prepared to push the limits going to minimum (free-range) standards," says Kyle.

The Crozier family built their tradition and their reputation over 50 years always believing in farming free range, with farming practices focused on the welfare of the bird, high quality standards, hard work, respect for the environment and their customers, and that's how we intend to see it continue, he says.

Apple and date stuffing Gluten Free

- 3 medium diced onion (about 2 cups)
- 2 cups of diced celery
- 2 medium diced apples (about 2 cups)
- 20 or so dates, chopped
- 2 cups of almond meal
- 2 teaspoons sage
- 2 teaspoons thyme
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons of coconut oil or butter
- 3 eggs lightly beaten

In a frying pan melt the coconut oil or butter. Add onion, celery and apple. Cook for about 5 minutes until the onion is soft but not brown. Allow to cool slightly.

In a large bowl mix almond meal, herbs, salt, pepper and dates. Add eggs and the slightly cooled mixture from the frying pan and mix well.

Cook in a greased loaf pan or roll into stuffing balls. Bake for approximately 45 mins-1 hour at 180°C





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Getting horticulture in front of the new Government

New Zealand now has a new Government, led by the Labour Party, with New Zealand First and the Green Party.

WORDS BY MIKE CHAPMAN, CEO OF HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND



ABOVE: Brown marmorated stink bug
LEFT: Houses encroaching in Pukekohe
BELOW: Mike Chapman

Much has already been said about how unique this is—three parties with strong views banding together to govern New Zealand. All of their policies point to wanting New Zealanders to do well and we believe access to healthy food will be an important part of the mix. So we now have a great opportunity to talk to the new Ministers and their staff about our horticulture story—the opportunities and challenges.

Our number one issue is biosecurity. It is vital that the new Government understands how important it is to maintain very high controls at our borders and continues to enhance the protections already in existence. More importantly, the Government must keep funding flowing into response preparation so that we can respond quickly and hopefully eradicate any new pest. Number one on our list is the brown marmorated stink bug and our number one job—industry and Government working together—is to prepare our response.

With our borders secure from biosecurity threats, the three key ingredients for successful growing are land, water and labour. In each of these areas, in conjunction with the product groups, associations and companies that make up the horticultural industry, we have programmes running. We need to acquaint the new Government with these programmes and seek their continued support.

Protecting high value land for growing fruit and vegetables is one of our very strong

campaigns. We think New Zealand needs a food security policy. The point we are making is that New Zealand needs to be able to feed itself with fresh, locally grown produce and not have to rely on imported produce. There are some areas in New Zealand, such as Northland, Pukekohe, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Horowhenua, Canterbury, Central Otago and Southland that are particularly well suited to horticulture growing. These areas need to be protected through Government policy when it comes to planning new housing and urban development. What many people do not realise, for example, is that Pukekohe provides spring vegetables that feed New Zealand. If Pukekohe expands with 50,000 houses, as per the Auckland plan, that puts our ability to feed ourselves at risk. We cannot always rely on other countries to have food available for us at a reasonable price.

Water is also critical—nothing grows without it. One of the key points to discuss with the incoming Government is access to water.

Water policy is complex. No one pays for water in New Zealand. By law, urban New Zealand only pays for water treatment and infrastructure. There can be confusion as councils charge on a volumetric basis, but urban dwellers are still not paying for the water itself. Rural New Zealand also pays for water consents and the infrastructure required to irrigate. So we will be asking the new

Government to treat all New Zealand water users equally and to be very clear about the intentions of any new water-use policy, and very aware of the unintended impacts that may occur, such as increasing the price of healthy food.

Finally, we need skilled and reliable labour. We need to attract talent to horticulture as we have incredible careers on offer. This is no easy task and as an industry we need to partner with Government on this, including on getting training tailored to industry needs.

We look forward to progressing the opportunities and meeting the new challenges with the newly appointed Ministers.





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Ruralco Supplier Awards—recognising excellence



Shocked is how this year's winners of the Ruralco Supreme Supplier of the Year described their reaction to hearing they had taken out this much coveted award.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

Shane and Cheryl Stocker of Stocker Solutions in Ashburton say while they were extremely honoured to win this prestigious award for the very first time, they were also shocked. "We are always focused on delivering great service for our clients by "providing results for success", and winning this award is testament to this tried and true formula which is an everyday part of our business."

It's been a busy year for Stocker's. A rebrand of the business was undertaken during the middle of the year, and the couple say it has contributed to their success. "Over the last 22 years of operation, we have always operated on the proviso we can provide a solution for any problem thrown at us and a lot of clients didn't realise we offered a full plumbing package, not just rural or dairy plumbing." And so Stocker Solutions—Providing Results for Success' was born, with active promotion of the varied services it offers in the areas of milking, plumbing, effluent and industrial.

"The rebrand has given clean, crisp, clarity across the Stocker branding, and has filtered through into everyday aspect of the company's operation."

Shane and Cheryl also attribute their success to their great team of staff. "They have all helped the business to excel in each of the sections the award was based on. We've got a great team of people working for us helping to benefit both the company and our clients. Every idea is always considered and brought up for discussion as to how it could benefit everyone concerned. Our sales growth can be attributed to a great sales team and new marketing implementations across the board, appealing to customers, and how we can benefit them on and off farm. Implementing a new accounting and job management package has also helped the company move along in leaps and bounds, saving time on paperwork, allowing us to focus on our customers where it counts, as well as being able to meet those all-important deadlines."

Stocker's believe being aligned with Ruralco has greatly increased their marketability as their clients love the streamlined efficiency of billing, and access to great cardholder discounts. "The majority of our clients are Ruralco Cardholders. We love being aligned with Ruralco, as it doesn't just benefit our clients; it benefits our company and continues to allow us to provide solutions for our clients giving them results for success."



ABOVE: Emma & Alan Neumann of Neumanns Tyres, winners of the Members Choice Award
LEFT: Shane & Cheryl Stocker of Stocker Solutions, winners of the Supreme Supplier Award

While this year's win was a first for Stocker's, the winner of Ruralco's other major supplier award has an enviable history of having also won awards in previous years.

Neumann's Tyres won the Supreme Award last year, and this year the Ashburton based family business won Members' Choice Award for the second time (the company also won the award in 2011).

As the name suggests, the award winner is chosen following cardholder's voting for the suppliers they felt offered value for money and went beyond the call of duty, giving exceptional service.

Co-owners and brothers, Alan and Ian Neumann say winning the Members' Choice Award was very special. "It is tremendously exciting for us and for our staff. It is a great acknowledgement for the great effort put in by our whole team in every department, not just over the last 12 months, but every day."

"Winning this award for a second time shows the commitment our staff have towards a positive customer service culture within our business. It also shows the loyalty of our customers who have taken the time to vote for us and we are very grateful to them for that."

Some of those are now second and third generation customers – much like the family running Neumann's Tyres. Alan and Ian's parent's founded the business, and now third generation family members are also involved. "It's something our customers like about Neumann's—its family values."

Alan and Ian said while win was hugely important to staff and customers, it also clearly demonstrated the loyalty shown by Ruralco Cardholders and the strength of the Ruralco business model. "Ruralco has been a great success story for us and the connection has been very important."

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How to get more out of your milk

Reducing costs and improving milk income could be as easy as making a few simple changes to your dairy plant. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY SKELLERUP



As a bonus, you'll end up milking more efficiently too.

One change in particular has so many benefits it sounds too good to be true, from shortening milk-out time and reducing cup slip to lowering somatic cell counts and increasing milksolids yield.

But those who have tried it say they're well and truly convinced.

Changing milking liners once they reach their use-by date also helps save power, labour and animal health costs and can increase yield while minimising the risk of costly grades.

“One change in particular has so many benefits it sounds too good to be true, from shortening milk-out time and reducing cup slip to lowering somatic cell counts and increasing milksolids yield.”

Farmers who change milking liners at the recommended lifespan of 2,500 milkings report immediate reduction in teat end damage as well as better Somatic Cell Count (SCC) result, according to Skellerup national manager Perry Davis.

“Unfortunately because liners are hidden inside the cups, you can't see what happens to them when they wear out. The first thing you might see instead is a cow kicking the cluster off, damaged teat ends or a surprisingly high BSCC on the milk docket.”

That's because a worn, badly fitting liner can leave milk in the udder, slip-off the teat and/or leave noticeable rings at the top of the teat. Permanent teat damage is not only possible, but common. On top of that, any cracks in the rubber are likely to harbour bacteria.

A good liner, well-fitted, is just the opposite, Perry says. It will completely milk a cow out quickly and efficiently. It doesn't slip, and it leaves the teats looking very similar in size and colour to how they looked before milking.

On some large herd operations, liners reach 2500 milkings and are changed as often as every two months as part of standard farm protocols to protect milk quality.

That may sound excessive but when you look at the statistics, those properties are simply following best practice based on average liner changes. New Zealand dairy farmers expect their liners to last for about 4900 milkings, or nearly twice their effective lifetime.

Here's an example of how to work out how many days until milking liners should be changed for maximum benefit:

Step one

Multiply the number of cows being milked by the number of milkings per day.

Step two

Divide the number in 'Step one' by the number of milking clusters in the milking plant.

Step three

Divide 2,500 by the number in 'Step two'. This is the number of days between optimum liner changes.

For 750 cows, milked twice a day in a 60 bale rotary plant, each cluster is milking 25 cows per day. Divide 2,500 by 25 and the answer is 100 days. This farm should change liners every 100 days (see www.2500change.co.nz for the calculator)

Perry says farmers looking for efficiencies across their whole operation can implement other simple steps to get the best out of their milk harvesting this season.

Fitting a new milk filter at every milking, for example, keeps sediment down and likewise reduces contaminants for better milk quality.

“Perry says farmers looking for efficiencies across their whole operation can implement other simple steps to get the best out of their milk harvesting this season.”

This is not only best practice, but more cost effective and efficient than cleaning and re-using filters because it takes less time to change out a new filter than it does to clean and dry old ones.

When it comes to rubber tubing, regular change is again a good thing—every year for milk tubing, and every two years for air tubing.

Perry Davis says the interior of milk tubing in particular can be degraded by milk fat and cleaning chemicals long before signs of damage can be seen from the outside.

Worn out air tubing causes loss of vacuum, cup slippage and poor or partial milk out, none of which contributes to optimal milk harvesting.

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Top tips for re-grassing

Renewing pasture can have a significant impact on production and animal health.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS

Pasture renewal involves a significant investment, but ongoing returns make it well worthwhile. New grass is leafier, higher in ME and more palatable, resulting in more milk and faster liveweight gains. Renewing pasture can also have an impact on endophytes, internal parasites, fertility and ryegrass staggers.

“Identifying which pastures to renew is your first step,” says Ballance Agri-Nutrients Dynamics Specialist, Jim Risk. The Pasture Renewal Charitable Trust (pasturere renewal.org.nz) has gathered some great resources to help farmers score pasture condition and analyse the costs and benefits of renewal.

“South Island farmers typically identify paddocks to be re-grassed in spring, put them into a winter forage crop and establish permanent pasture the following spring,” observes Jim. “Soil pH and nutrient status should be checked when the paddocks are selected. It takes time to adjust some factors—particularly pH—and getting these things right up front will pay off later.”

Best start

Get advice on the best grass cultivars and clover varieties for your farm and feed budget needs. “Do you need it to mature early or late? Are dry summers an issue? What endophytes are best for your area? Choosing the right cultivars can make a big difference.”

Also think about your cultivation method. “Unless your paddock has been damaged by winter grazing or has serious drainage or contouring issues, minimum tillage is best to maintain soil structure and moisture,” advises Jim.

Whatever method you choose, it is important to provide germinating seeds with immediate access to the nutrients they need. This requires a more specific approach than your base fertiliser can deliver. “Phosphorus is essential for early root and shoot development, but it is not very mobile in the soil,” explains Jim. “A ready supply of phosphorus close to the developing plant is the best way to support this all-important early growth.”

Nitrogen is also important—particularly following a crop—to encourage greater tillering and leaf expansion, leading to faster leaf canopy cover. The quicker the canopy cover develops, the fewer problems you will have with early weed invasions. “DAP is an excellent starter fertiliser option,” says Jim. “Drilled adjacent to seed, it will put nitrogen and phosphorus right where it is needed to get grass off to the best possible start.”

Handle with care

Spraying and breaking pasture with a winter forage crop helps with weed and pest control but your new grass will still need special attention, particularly in the first eight weeks. “Monitor

closely for pests and weeds and act quickly on anything you find using a targeted herbicide or pesticide,” says Jim.

Graze new pastures earlier rather than later to keep the sward open, let sunlight in and encourage clovers. “The first grazing can be six to eight weeks after sowing,” says Jim. “Check with a pluck test. If the grass tears when tugged, plants are firmly rooted meaning animals won’t pull them out of the ground.” Graze with light stock or limit grazing time to prevent pasture and soil damage.

Nurture with nitrogen

It takes up to 18 months for clovers to re-establish in new pasture and fix sufficient nitrogen to supply themselves and their companion grasses. “Applying nitrogen fertiliser after each grazing will encourage tillering, reduce weed competition and promote a healthy sward,” says Jim. “Keep applications light—around 25–35 kg N/ha—as too much nitrogen will inhibit clover establishment and the growth of root nodules.”

Pasture is the most cost-effective form of feed and given that the return on investment from pasture renewal can range from 10–35%, it is definitely a strategy that can make a difference to your bottom line.

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Technology weighs in for efficient drafting

For Alister Donald timing is everything over early spring as his winter purchased lambs come to finishing weight and moving them through at their optimal weight becomes an almost daily demand. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY GALLAGHER

Farming near Geraldine, Alister and his wife Michelle had been using a Gallagher W610 scale system coupled to their ever-reliable Gallagher Sheep Auto Drafter for the past five years. They were examining what their options were to upgrade a system that had over 50,000 lambs through it in that time.

With spring growth accelerating and lambs gaining 2–3 kg of liveweight a week each, weighing is a critical part of his business, and identifying lambs over weight as important as finding those not making weigh targets. “The Gallagher Sheep Auto Drafter has proven ideal for moving them into their bands. It’s important we keep them consistent and don’t get mixed across weight ranges when we are sending this many this regularly at this time of year.”

The Gallagher Sheep Auto Drafter is usually set to draft off the “lights” coming under 43kgs, the upcoming 43-44kg line, the 44-50kg kill weight line and the “overweight” 50kg-plus lambs. Year in year out the drafter has performed consistently, well set up under cover on concrete in an ideal drafting environment. Alister had discussed with Gallagher Territory Manager Mark Maitland about the options for upgrading his scale head system, and Mark suggested he consider the company’s latest release, the TW range.

Only released this year the TW weigh scale range was developed with farmers’

needs firmly in mind. It has a functional touchscreen interface delivering an easily navigable pathway, from the moment it is turned on to reviewing detailed weigh data. A demonstration from Mark of the TW’s capabilities convinced Alister to make the move up to a TW-1 Weigh Scale. Over 3,000 weighs and a month later he is more than convinced he made the right choice investing in weigh technology that has made a regular and precise job a lot simpler, and more informed. “The TW-1 is really easy to set up, you can see how it is quite similar to a smartphone to use, and everyone has one of those these days.”

Alister likens the TW-1 to a notebook—at the end of the drafting exercise he has all the information he needs in front of him, is easily accessible and in a format, that he can use straight away. “The scales will give us a running total of the numbers of sheep that fall in to our weigh bands, averages and totals, the statistics are all right there to see.” A key feature of the TW’s design is the touchscreen interface and it has proven to be everything its designers intended for Alister. “Michelle can see it from 10–12 metres away down the drafting race, it is very clear and makes it very easy to use.”

He has appreciated how easy the TW-1 is to set up, and knows after only a few weeks use there are other features he is still to fully utilise. “But it is very easy to find out where to go if you have

any problems, you can just push a button if you have a query and the answer is there to see.”

He also appreciates the easily to navigate pathways designers have built into the TW-1, ensuring that he has not needed a degree in computer programming to get the machine up and running. “My son Jordan was saying I should opt for another brand when I was looking at my options, but I think he is well convinced now that this was a good decision, it’s the bee’s knees.”

Alister opted for the entry level TW-1 scale and believes the investment has been a relatively low cost to make a significant leap in upgrading his weigh system’s capability. That value has only grown in recent weeks as early spring lamb prices hit \$7/kg, meaning knowing lambs’ optimal weights is more valuable than ever. “We are targeting them to be 21.5kg-22kg CW, or 45-50kg LW, and any that are getting too heavy, we need to pull them out sooner than later to still get good money for them.”

The Sheep Auto Drafter and TW-1 have integrated well and Alister is also looking forward to hooking the TW-1 up to his cattle weigh system where he is taking yearling cattle and targeting them for 600kg-plus for finishing. Talk to Ruralco today about how Gallagher products and technology can benefit your farm operation.

Leading our co-operative

Ruralco is wholly owned by ATS (Ashburton Trading Society) and its Board of Directors is charged with governance, with setting strategy and with putting in place policy to ensure the co-operative remains true to purpose and vision while also being forward thinking.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY

It's a far cry from the co-operative's early days in the 1960's when directors 'had their hands in the gearbox' at every turn. Through necessity, those directors were involved in all aspects of the day to day running of the business, even down to recruiting members.

Nowadays, the ATS Board boasts a professional and diverse membership by way of age, gender and background. It's a board which embraces the skills and expertise each director brings to the table, and recognises the importance of both farmer directors and independent directors, so much so, that it recently made the decision following a full board and strategy review to appoint a new independent director to the Board instead of a farmer director following the creation of a vacancy left by long standing and valued director, Ian Mackenzie.

This will bring the number of independent directors on the board to two (currently Sue Lindsay is the board's only independent director), with the other five remaining board members being farmer directors. They

are Alister Body, Jessie Chan-Dorman, Tony Coltman, Mark Saunders and Gabrielle Thompson.

In announcing the decision to appoint another independent director, Chairman Alister Body said it was important the board ensure the co-operative was well placed to thrive going forward. "We all know the dynamic, competitive market place and environment in which we operate is continually changing, and that we have to respond to these changes in a positive way and embrace the future."

"Independent directors provide us with the opportunity to acquire specialised skills in specific areas of expertise, ensuring we have a well-balanced and diverse board as we address the current and future needs of our co-operative. We remain committed to a strong, farmer led focus on our board, and we believe the mix of independent and farmer directors will ensure our co-operative has a vibrant future."



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Alister Body

CHAIRMAN

Alister Body graduated from Lincoln University with a BCom in Agriculture and was elected to the ATS Board of Directors in 2011, becoming Chairman in 2016.

Alister is also a current Director of Pastoral Genomics, as well as Chair of the Dairy Environment Leadership Group and the Canterbury Dairy Leader's Group. Past governance experience includes Director of DairyNZ, Chair of the New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards Trust, Provincial Dairy Chairman with Federated Farmers and National President of New Zealand Young Farmers Club.

Alister and his wife Janine Peters farm at Methven, Mid Canterbury where they milk 600 cows. Alister's other off farm interests include skiing, sailing and theatre (both acting and directing).



Jessie Chan-Dorman

DIRECTOR

Jessie Chan-Dorman was elected to the ATS Board of Directors in 2013. Jessie and her husband Hayden are dairy business owners leasing 420ha at Dorie, Mid Canterbury and milking 950 cows.

She has an Honours degree in Animal Science and has worked in a range of rural professional positions over a fifteen year period. Jessie has completed the Fonterra Governance Development Programme, the Food and Agribusiness Marketing Experience and the Kellogg Rural Leaders Programme. She is currently on the Fonterra Shareholders Council and has previously served on the Board of Connetics Ltd, DairyNZ Ltd (as an Associate Director), Business Mid Canterbury and Federated Farmers Mid Canterbury. Jessie is a member of the Institute of Directors and New Zealand Asian Leaders.

Jessie and Hayden have a four-year-old son, Adam.



Tony Coltman

DIRECTOR

Tony Coltman is currently an Equity Manager and Director in Datona Ltd/Canlac Holdings Ltd., a 1,400 cow equity partnership at Dunsandel, Canterbury. He grew up in Nelson and although he comes from a non-farming background he graduated from Lincoln University with a BCom Ag (Farm Management) and Diploma in Farm Management (with distinction).

Having held several senior management positions in Rural banking, both in New Zealand and Australia he was also the General Manager for Development and Extension for Dexcel (now DairyNZ) prior to spending four and a half years as General Manager and shareholder/Director for Focal Dairies, a 4,000 cow pasture based dairy operation in Missouri, USA.

Tony has three children, aged 13, 15 and 19. He and his wife, Dana Carver, are passionate about farmer wellness and sustainable lifestyles. In addition to the farm, they own a coaching and training business and established a charitable organisation which promotes and implements community wellness.



Sue Lindsay

INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR

Sue is an acknowledged New Zealand business leader and an internationally award-winning executive having been recognised as New Zealand Young Executive of the Year, Southlander of the Year and the World Young Business Achiever award winner. Her career has taken her from running the family sheep and cropping farm in Southland into the leadership of CRT Southland, where she was directly credited with master minding growth strategies that increased revenues by over 200% in less than five years.

Sue is the Founder and CEO of Real Insight, a research and strategy consultancy where she curates and leads a team of expert strategists, analysts, creatives and coaches. Their research is at the cutting edge of talent and market insight and informs strategy and focuses leadership for clients in New Zealand and Australia. Sue brings diverse governance experience including the Board of SOE Genesis Power, Netball Southland and the Dairy Women's Network.



Mark Saunders

DIRECTOR

Mark Saunders was elected to the ATS Board of Directors in 2012 and is a Director of Pro-Active New Zealand Limited, a Director of MHV water irrigation scheme, a member of the Institute of Directors, a member of the Mid Canterbury Managed Aquifer Recharge governance group and a member of Dairy NZ Environment Leaders' Forum. Mark and his wife Pennie currently farm 2,000 dairy cows at Lagmhor, Mid Canterbury, having farmed in the neighbouring Westerfield district in partnership since 2003.

Mark brings to the Board a good understanding of compliance and environmental issues and impact on the primary sector, governance experience and a focus on seeking continuous improvement for the co-operative.

In addition to supporting his three boys with rugby coaching at the local Southern Rugby Club, Mark enjoys being actively involved in the community, fishing, and hunting.



Gabrielle Thompson

DIRECTOR

Elected to the Board in 2012, Gabrielle Thompson graduated from Massey University with a Veterinary degree in 2000. Initially working for Riverside Vets, she opened her own companion animal clinic in 2004, growing to five clinics around the lower South Island over a 10 year period before selling these clinics to a nationwide company.

Gabrielle also owns an artisan bread company which sells through supermarkets nationwide; she is a chartered member of the Institute of Directors; and is experienced in importing and exporting. In addition to this, she currently heads the Board's Risk and Audit Committee, and previously chaired the Health and Safety Committee.

She and her husband, along with their family, own and operate a 530ha arable and store lamb farm at Dorie, Mid Canterbury. In her free time, Gabrielle spends time with family, including her daughter Frances. She likes to go to the gym, spend time with friends, travel, ski and be outdoors.

ATS director steps down for next generation

As he steps down from his role as a director of ATS this spring, Ian Mackenzie is confident the co-operative is well set up to punch above its weight in meeting the needs of its farmer shareholders.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

Ian has been a board member for the past 12 years and has observed the changes in competition in the rural service sector over that time.

"In the past farmer co-operatives used to pick up market share from the other companies whenever they sneezed. Now the main competition is from other farmer owned co-operatives.

"The competition has shifted significantly over time, and having several farmer co-operatives competing with each other means that shareholder loyalty is divided and is harder to earn."

He acknowledges the last few years have been difficult, but ATS has come through some significant challenges and is well set up for the future.

"We enjoyed a record Instore Days this winter which reflects support for our offering and a level of confidence returning to farming."

"A big part of our success has also been recognising the need to cater to the diversity of farming systems of the Ashburton and greater Canterbury farming community. It's that diversity that has meant we have held up well when another sector suffers a down turn."

Ian believes repositioning ATS under the Ruralco brand will help put the co-op in a good position to take its card services nationally to all New Zealand farmers.

Under the management of Group Chief Executive Rob Sharkie, Ruralco has a renewed focus on selling while keeping operational costs down, and sticking with its commitment of best value to farmer shareholders.

As early members of ATS, Ian recognises and is proud of the role ATS, now Ruralco, has played as a disrupter in the farm supply market.

"We introduced the first deals for discounted fuel and electricity for farmers, and were early pioneers in the use of generic ag chemicals. We were the farm supply equivalent of Uber back in the day."

"The challenge now is to find the future opportunities in lowering farmers' costs. It is also to encourage the next generation of farmers to understand the importance of working with



their co-operative to realise the benefits of our collective strength in disrupting markets, so that as farmers we avoid that old trap of buying retail and selling wholesale."

While he may be stepping down from his governance role with ATS, Ian is by no means fading from the agricultural scene.

He is relishing the opportunity to devote more time to helping agriculture in Canterbury achieve its full potential. He brings some unique perspectives and skills around environmental and water management that are crucial to the region's sustainable success.

Ian has had a long involvement with the politics and management of water. His family have been irrigating their farm Akaunui since the late 60's and he has been part of the Eiffelton Irrigation Scheme since its inception in 1985 and Chairman for the last few years. He served on the Board of Irrigation NZ and was also part of the Land and Water Forum in Wellington for four years in his role as Water and Environment Spokesman for the National Board of Federated Farmers.

Ian was also heavily involved with trying to get some sense into Plan Change 2 (the Hinds Plains plan) and as such, is a strong advocate for the Managed Aquifer Recharge project (MAR) as part of the project team.

The MAR project is all about putting water back into the aquifers to dilute the nitrates that have leached into the groundwater, and to recharge the aquifer so that the flows in the spring fed waterways nearer the coast can be restored.



ABOVE: The Hinds River running at healthy levels
ABOVE LEFT: Ian Mackenzie

The first stage of the project was to establish an infiltration pond not far out of Tinwald that has had very exciting results in diluting groundwater nitrate levels using only relatively small amounts of water. This has encouraged the MAR team to push onto the 2nd stage of the project which will involve establishing another dozen or so smaller soak holes to test infiltration rates and monitor the effects on nitrates in bores down gradient of some of these infiltration galleries.

"When I was in Wellington I advocated strongly for catchment based solutions to water quality problems rather than shifting all the burden onto individual landowners. That always seemed to me to be a financially disastrous alternative that relies too heavily on bureaucrats using Overseer with all its volatility.

"MAR is a catchment wide solution and if we can make this a success then it will make individual farm nutrient loss reductions of much less importance in delivering better water quality outcomes. That has to be good for everyone." Over coming months, the second stage of MAR will reveal more data on the concept's success.

Meanwhile Ian remains a committed and passionate advocate for the huge potential to make Canterbury the leading example of a highly productive, sustainable food basket for New Zealand, and the world.

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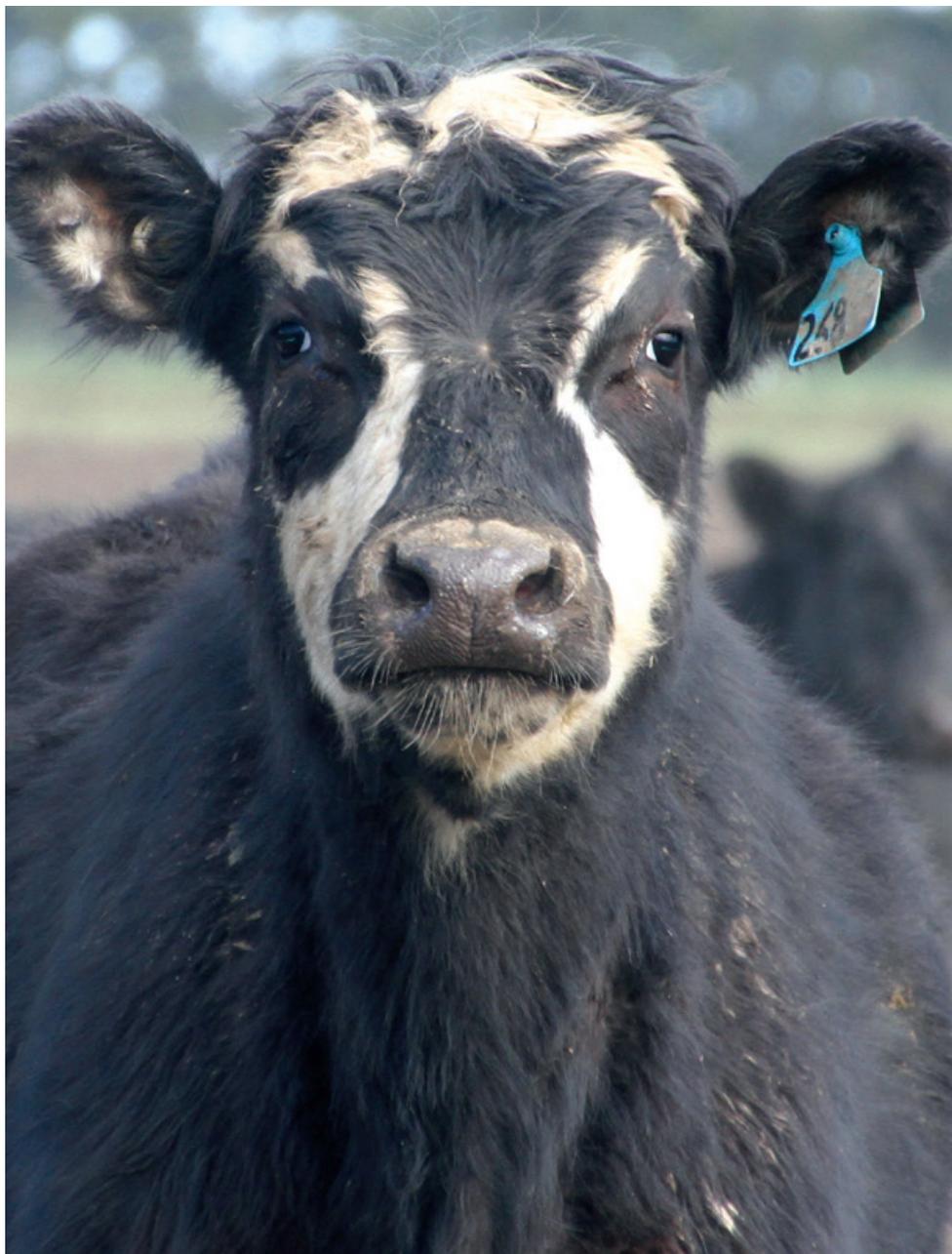
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Thiamine deficiency and Pinkeye

The changing seasons often bring a new set of animal health challenges and diseases.

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



In autumn parasite problems, in winter copper problems, in spring metabolic problems, especially in dairy cows, and in summer a disease which can affect all ruminants- vitamin B1 deficiency.

Vitamin B1, also known as thiamine, is produced by microorganisms in the rumen of both sheep and cattle. Thiamine has an important function in producing energy in nervous tissue. This energy is used to keep excessive salt out side nerve cells. In thiamine deficiency the mechanisms which keep salt out start to fail, and salt leaks back in to the cells. The affected cells start to swell and become dysfunctional.

Thiamine is a water soluble vitamin and cannot be stored in large quantities in ruminants. Occasionally bacteria in the rumen degrade thiamine or make it much less available for the cow or sheep.

Dietary changes predispose to thiamine deficiency by causing an imbalance in bacterial populations in the rumen. Such changes include high starch intakes in summer, meal feeding to calves, and changes in digestibility of feeds. High sulphur levels may also play a role in thiamine deficiency. Animals affected by thiamine deficiency show nervous signs. The brain swells and presses

against the inside of the skull. This is largely responsible for the changes in behavior in affected animals.

In the early stages, animals with thiamine deficiency separate themselves and appear unsteady or blind. They walk aimlessly and bump into gates etc. If left untreated the disease quickly progresses and these animals become aggressive, blind, have muscle tremors and soon are unable to stand. Once down they become more and more rigid, throw their heads back and have fatal seizures if no treatments are given.

Treatment for thiamine deficiency involves high doses of thiamine hydrochloride possibly combined with anti-inflammatory drugs. A quick diagnosis is required for the treatment to be successful, and a careful veterinary examination will soon rule out other possibilities such as lead poisoning, magnesium deficiency, Listeriosis and meningitis.

In summer thiamine deficiency is common in weaned calves. These young ruminants are often exposed to changes in the composition and digestibility of feed.

Calves should always be given plenty of fibrous feed to complement their grass, and any changes to the diet should be made slowly.

Pinkeye

Pinkeye can affect sheep and cattle and is common in summer. Dust and flies are major risk factors for the development and transmission of pinkeye. Dust can abrade the eye surface resulting in an opportunity for the bacteria that cause pinkeye to start an infection. Flies transmit the infection between animals. Long grass can also scratch then eye predisposing it to infection.

Pinkeye is highly contagious, so once detected it may be necessary to treat large numbers of in- contact animals to slow the spread of the disease.

The clinical signs of pinkeye include a watery discharge coming from the eyes and running down the face, redness in the eye, and a central ulcer which is extremely painful. The eyes become very sensitive to sunlight. One or both eyes may be affected.

Once you suspect you have pinkeye the best advice is to contact your veterinarian without delay to correctly diagnose the condition and treat in the most appropriate way.



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When we lose a loved one organising a funeral and the associated arrangements can seem very overwhelming. There are many decisions and choices to be made over what seems a short period of time as well as trying to come to terms with our grief.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES BY BARBARA LOVELOCK & EMMILY HARMER



ABOVE: Jo Metcalf, the owner and funeral director of Memory Funerals
MAIN IMAGE: Memory Funerals can arrange all aspects of a funeral service

Jo Metcalf, owner and Funeral Director at Memory Funerals is there to assist and guide you through this often difficult process from start to finish, and ensure your loved one will be remembered in a memorable and special way. "I've been assisting and looking after South and Mid Canterbury families for over 10 years and I'm there to make sure the families' needs are met with dignity and care, and their loved one gets the unique and personalised funeral they want." Jo is exactly the type of person who you can rely on during a crisis – she is sincere, organised, calm, and is completely devoted to helping families through a difficult time.

Jo and the team at Memory Funerals pride themselves on offering a boutique funeral service and going the extra mile for clients if they want something different from the standard funeral package. As well as the traditional morning or afternoon farewells Jo offers both evening and weekend services, and is available to cater to various ethnic religions and traditions within our multi-cultural community. Jo sincerely believes it's important to acknowledge individuality and respect cultural and spiritual beliefs. They have organised lakeside ceremonies, sitting on hay

bales for a memorial on a family farm and have coordinated the use of specialist vehicles. "In our changing society I think people want something a bit more individual and we want to work alongside you to make that possible" she says. Memory Funerals can arrange all aspects of a funeral service whether it's a burial or cremation, or religious or non-religious ceremony. They work with all local churches and ministers as well as having a wide list of celebrants and a range of venue options depending on size and budget. On the day Jo is always present to ensure everything goes to plan; the casket will be taken to the venue, flowers collected, catering is organised, order of service sheets designed and distributed, book of remembrance to sign, PowerPoint photo presentations can also be arranged and Jo always ensures that something unique is done to remember your loved one's life. "We always try and make it personalised, whether it's the grandchildren placing a note in the casket, releasing balloons at the graveside, or playing

a particular song or special music. The list is as wide and varied as your imagination".

Memory Funerals can cater to all budgets with packages ranging from \$2,500 through to more elaborate funerals. With changes in personal wishes and trends a large percentage of people now choose cremation, floral tributes and death notices in newspapers can also vary, as does the venue and catering choice affecting the overall cost. If you are working within a budget let Jo know and she can tailor make a fitting farewell. Memory Funerals offer a private function room at their premises for smaller intimate memorial services and there is space to provide catering for guests as well as an adjoining viewing room.

While death and funeral arrangements aren't something that many of us are comfortable thinking about, Jo believes that having a funeral plan in place can alleviate a lot of stress for families. Jo encourages anyone wanting to know more or considering their funeral ideas to drop in for a chat, or she is happy to visit you at home "Memory Funerals prides itself on treating all clients with sensitivity, kindness, dignity and respect. Whatever your plan is I'm here to assist you through the funeral process leaving you with lasting treasured memories of your loved ones life".



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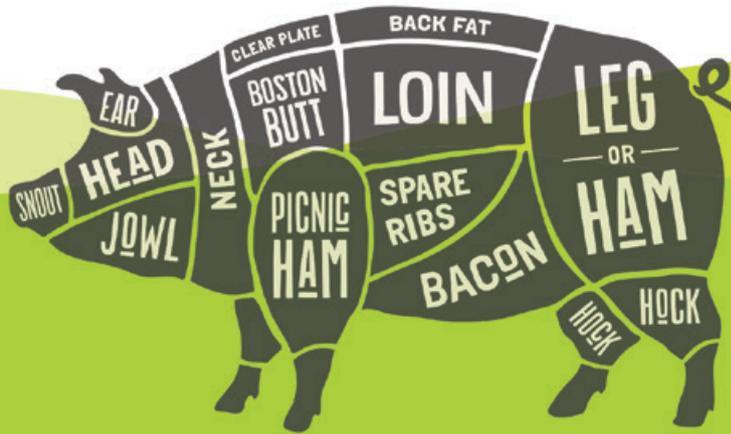
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WHO IS AGRICHEM?

Established on the 31st October 1986 and widely regarded as the pioneer of liquid nutrition innovation, Agrichem produces a vast range of Specialty Liquid Fertilisers, Soluble Solids, Plant Health Formulas and Adjuvants that have re-enforced our reputation as the supplier of choice for astute growers in New Zealand and internationally.

As a proud long-established manufacturer Agrichem believe that quality and yield have never been more critical than in today's high-demand, low margin environment where return on investment is key. Maximisation of opportunities is essential and only the highest quality inputs can achieve the highest quality outcomes. Agrichem's unparalleled experience and technical expertise garnered through decades of close collaboration with farmers, dealers and researchers has resulted in the development of unique, premium quality products.

WHAT SETS AGRICHEM APART FROM THE REST?

The rejuvenation of Agrichem's fundamental traditional values and methodologies are evident in our committed shift from an anecdotal approach to one of scientifically verified data that is beyond reproach. Agrichem's extensive and expansive field trial work delivers statistically sound data able to withstand the most stringent scrutiny—a proven success formula for efficacy and efficiency. Ruralco and Agrichem are currently following this scientific approach in the Canterbury region in 2017 and beyond.

Despite New Zealand's regulatory standards for fertilisers being amongst the least rigorous in the world, farmers are experiencing an ever-increasing demand for high quality produce. The continued desire to enhance our knowledge-base and offerings through highly innovative products makes Agrichem the ideal partner for Ruralco and farmers looking to stay ahead of the pack.



With operations around the world including Fluence in the US and Fluagri in Latin America, along with Agrichem solutions produced under license in Brazil and state-of-the-art-manufacturing facilities, Agrichem is a true global business distributing to over 30 countries across 5 continents.

Agrichem's commitment to its philosophy in innovation has resulted in continued ongoing investment, including more than \$11 million over the past 4 years in research and development, a fully-automated manufacturing plant, and sales and support infrastructure to ensure seamless, timely and cost-effective delivery process from factory to farm.

ABOVE: Example of droopy, poor quality, low Ca, Mg and B leaves of fodder beet: Canterbury 2017

RIGHT: Fodder beet foliage with Grocal MGB applied—note lack of leaf droopiness, lack of Ca, Mg and B deficiency: Canterbury 2017

Agrichem's focus on investment has resulted in a pipeline of innovation through crop modelling, management automation, nutrient application, new irrigation technologies, measurement technologies, and the introduction of cutting edge surfactants, fungicides, adjuvants and wetters. From our foliar suspension products through to our soil applied solutions, Agrichem is the tried, proven and trusted source of

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



health



products that have delivered consistent and comprehensive results.

Along with the vast range of locally developed products, Agrichem has secured exclusive licensing deals to manufacture a host of unique, patented, proprietary products from around the globe. In 2018, this will include a range of exciting biological agents for disease and pest control integrated into fertiliser programs. Through the success of superior crop performance, plant protection, irrigation management, nutrient application and services, Agrichem's evolution has further galvanizing our hard-earned status as one of the world's leading manufacturers and supplier of Specialty Liquid

Fertilisers, Water Soluble Fertilisers, Plant Health Formulas and Adjuvants.

Get in contact your Ruralco Representative to ask how we can assist improving the quality and yields of your crop and pasture production.

FORAGE TYPE/PRODUCT FOCUS

Ruralco and Agrichem have a range of options for the 2017/2018 season for key forage crops. Key crops covered are;

Fodder beet: From drilling until canopy closure, key elements are required at the correct growth stages for forage quality and yield. A program of micro and macro-nutrients can be supplied for each situation.

Products for fodder beet include:

- Foliar application of Complete ZMC and Kelpak for early fibrous root development;
- Foliar applied Supa 3 ZBM for zinc, boron and molybdenum. Can be mixed with Agriphite;
- Soil applied Cal40 for stronger and heavier bulbs;
- Supa Bor Plus for boron to help reduce hollow heart;
- Foliar applied Grocal MGB just prior to row closure for maintaining forage quality of foliage.

Forage Maize: Maintain your yield potential and grazing quality with the following forage maize program integrated with current granular fertilisers:

- Foliar application of Complete ZMC plus Kelpak (or Booster Zinc Moly) for early fibrous root development. This combination can be applied with first in-crop herbicide;
- In-crop applications of Nitro Humus 323, Grocal MGB and Agri KS 32.

Grass pasture: Obtain higher nitrogen use efficiency and lower leaching potential with foliage applied nitrogen and micronutrient/growth promotant combination:

- Nitro Humus 323:
 - High concentration 32% liquid nitrogen;
 - Use rates of 20–25lt per ha;
 - Contains humic acid for less leaching of nitrate and softer on pasture.
- Booster Zinc Moly:
 - Help utilise applied N more efficiently;
 - Zinc and Molybdenum essential for converting free nitrates into amino acids and hence better grass growth and metabolisable energy;
 - Contains growth promotant for improved root growth after grazing.

The combined program of Nitro Humus 323 and Booster Zinc Moly will help you to create the ultimate pasture.

If you want to get the best out of your forage crops this season, get in contact with your Ruralco Representative and book a complementary assessment and nutritional program for the season with Agrichem.

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Liners are one of the single biggest factors influencing milk production. But more than 50% of New Zealand dairy farmers don't change them frequently enough. The result can be more cup slip, increased bacteria counts, and longer milking times.



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Flystrike prevention this summer

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



Cyrex Liquid has two proven active ingredients that provide knockdown control of blowflies, maggots and lice, as well as medium term protection against blowfly strike on sheep. These features, combined with its favourable operator and animal safety characteristics, make Cyrex Liquid an ideal solution for treating blowfly strike and lice on sheep.

Cyrex liquid is registered to prevent and treat blowfly (including *Lucilia cuprina*) strike in all breeds of sheep, including organophosphate resistant strains, for up to 12 weeks. Also lice on long wool Merino sheep (greater than three months wool) and coarse wool breeds, including strains resistant to synthetic pyrethroids.

The active ingredients in Cyrex Liquid are 12.5 g/L of spinosad, the active ingredient in EXTINOSAD™ Liquid, and 500 g/L of cyromazine, the active ingredient found in VETRAZIN™. Spinosad provides knockdown control of blowflies, maggot and lice. Cyromazine provides up to 12 weeks protection against blowfly strike.

Spinosad is a member of the spinosyn chemical family. Upon contact or ingestion, spinosad causes involuntary and prolonged tremors in the nervous system of susceptible species, leading to irreversible paralysis and death. Its unique mode of action kills blowfly and lice, including strains resistant to SP compounds. Spinosad has negligible human health risks or environmental toxicity.

Cyromazine is an insect growth regulator. It interferes with life cycle of susceptible insects by preventing the development of larval stages. Cyromazine has a different mode of action to some other IGR compounds, such as diflubenzuron (e.g. Fleecemaster® and Magnum®) and triflumuron (e.g. Zapp®). This different mode of action allows cyromazine to be effective against triflumuron or diflubenzuron-resistant blowflies.^{3,4}

Cyrex can be applied through Jetting races with 2L of Cyrex Liquid to 1000L of water. Ensure saturation to skin level and top up at the same rate with a minimum



of 2L of dipwash applied per sheep and an additional 0.5L for each month of wool growth up to a maximum of 5L per sheep. Constant replenishment shower dip is another method to use Cyrex mixing 2L of Cyrex Liquid with 1000L of water again ensuring saturation to skin level and top up at the same rate. No reinforcement is required. Do not allow the sump to fall below of total volume. As a flystrike dressing mix 10 mL of Cyrex Liquid with 5L of water. Remove the wool from around the area to be treated using clippers or shears and apply onto the affected area for the spot treatment of flystrike. With all application methods prepare a fresh dilution of Cyrex each day.

In Summary Cyrex Liquid is an ideal solution with two proven actives. Spinosad will knockdown active maggots and lice on sheep including resistant strains and Cyromazine providing up to 12 weeks

protection against blowfly strike. A 7-day meat-withholding period allows flexibility alongside favourable operator and environmental safety profile.

For more information on Cyrex contact Ruralco Farm Supplies today or your local Elanco Territory Manager.

REFERENCES: 1. EXTINOSAD Jetting Fluid/Flystrike Dressing for Sheep in Long Wool Technical Manual Version 1 30/11/00. Elanco Animal Health (For internal use only). 2. Hart R.J. et al. Technical Details of a new sheep blowfly insecticide. *Wool Technology and Sheep Breeding*, University of New South Wales, December 1979. 3. Levot, G. & Sales, N. Insect growth regulator cross-resistance studies in field- and laboratory selected strains of the Australian sheep blowfly (*Lucilia cuprina*). *Australian Journal of Entomology* (2004) 43: 374 – 377. 4. Heath, A. & Levot, G. Parasiticide resistance in fleece, lice and ticks in New Zealand and Australia: mechanisms, prevalence and prevention. *NZ Veterinary Journal* (2015).

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| 3.6m Triangle | \$89 | 3.6m x 3.6m x 5m Triangle | \$107 |
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Better facilities for a profitable product

The 2017–18 deer velvet season has opened strongly, with farmers reporting price levels about 20 per cent above last season's close.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DEER INDUSTRY NZ

Deer Industry NZ (DINZ) Asia market manager Rhys Griffiths says the price improvement is timely, given the investment many farmers are making in upgrades to their velvetting facilities.

From the start of the current season in early October, new hygiene regulations have

applied to all farms where velvet is harvested. On farms with modern facilities only minor changes have been needed. On some farms, older facilities have been rebuilt and freezers replaced.

“We are really impressed with the quality of the facilities that many farmers are building...”

DINZ quality assurance manager John Tacon says the regulatory bottom line is that all sheds must have a “clean zone”—a designated area where velvet antler is removed, handled and frozen. In this zone, all contact surfaces must be washable and clean

prior to velvet removal and handling.

“As soon as practicable after harvesting, but within two hours, velvet needs to be placed in a velvet-only freezer capable of freezing to at least minus 15°C,” he says. “Then before it leaves the farm, farmers must sign a Velvet Status Declaration—a legal document which confirms that the velvet has been removed and stored in compliance with the new regulations.

“We are really impressed with the quality of the facilities that many farmers are building. While hygiene is the driver, the new and upgraded facilities we are seeing are often much better for the deer and those who work with them. It shows the great pride deer farmers have in their industry and the



products they produce," says Tacon.

The need for hygiene standards was highlighted by a visit in late 2016 by Chinese officials who reviewed how New Zealand harvests, handles and stores velvet. Several farms were visited during velvetting as well as a couple of velvet pack-houses.

"The focus of the officials was on the safety of food and traditional medicines sold in China, particularly in relation to velvet. We found them very professional and they were generally complimentary about our industry," Tacon says. Following their visit, the Chinese regulators told the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) that standards needed to be tightened.

"China's requirements are not unreasonable and highlight the importance of hygiene and the maintenance of the cold chain to support velvet as a high quality, high value product for export or further domestic processing," Tacon says.

Paddy Boyd, a farmer member of the National Velvetting Standards Body (NVSBS), says the shed upgrades have been a long time coming. "We had started encouraging farmers to

upgrade before Chinese regulators decided to bring the supply and manufacture of traditional Chinese medicines into the modern era. In working with MPI on the new regulatory control scheme, we have been careful to ensure it is credible in the marketplace while being completely doable for farmers," Boyd says.

DINZ estimates velvet production will reach 675 tonnes this season, up slightly on last season.

Griffiths says this increase will be needed to meet growing demand for velvet as an ingredient in health foods in Korea.

"New health food products are bringing in new consumers, it's not just a case of velvet consumers moving from a traditional to a more modern form of product," he says.

"The growing consumer demand is also attracting more large manufacturers, all of whom are seeking NZ velvet for new health food products of their own. Some are also using our NZ velvet quality mark prominently on their packaging and mass media advertising."

ABOVE: Walls and floors must be washable and clean prior to velvet removal and handling

ABOVE LEFT: Recent increases in velvet production are needed to meet growing demand for velvet as an ingredient in health foods in Asia

He says an important industry goal is to encourage the development of a market for NZ velvet-based Healthy Functional Food (HFF) products in China.

"The market has the potential to be huge. Chinese HFF companies are strong and in some cases bigger than their Korean health food counterparts. To date they have held off from developing velvet-based HFFs because of regulatory barriers. These barriers have been largely resolved, so we are very optimistic."

In the meantime, South Korea remains the dominant market with about 60% of all NZ velvet consumed there. Some of this is velvet bought frozen from New Zealand, processed in China and re-exported to Korea. A growing quantity is being dried in New Zealand before being shipped direct to Korea.

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Unlocking a golden future through SMART irrigation

We are now looking forward to our 2018 Conference which will take place in Alexandra 17–19 April and invite farmers with an interest in irrigation to join us.

WORDS BY IRRIGATION NZ, IMAGES BY CENTRAL OTAGO TOURISM

Unlocking a Golden Future through SMART irrigation is the theme of conference. With so much public and media focus on irrigation and water issues, this is an opportunity to be updated on the future of water management and irrigation systems.

Three field trips will be offered where you can see best practice irrigation in action on a range of different farms and hear on the ground experiences from farmers about how they use irrigation to improve their productivity. You will have the option of choosing from a pastoral farming tour in the Manuherikia Valley and the Maniototo, visiting local orchards or seeing a range of local vineyards. Each trip will look at how different irrigation systems are being used to suit local conditions. The conference will also include an

expo featuring a huge range of products and services designed to help improve production and irrigation efficiency and save time.

Central Otago is a scenic and historically rich location, and the conference is a chance to see the district amongst spectacular autumnal colours. The history of irrigation in Central Otago is intimately linked to the region's Gold Rush. Rights to take and use water were originally in the 1860s and linked to mining, but were later being used for irrigation. The original water permits issued rights in perpetuity. In the depression the government funded irrigation expansion such as the Falls Dam scheme as public works projects, with more infrastructure developed from the 1950s to the 1980s. The Resource Management Act set a deadline for historical water permits linked to mining to expire in October 2021. Otago is now at a crossroads with the amount of water available for irrigation expected to reduce, and water permit holders needing to look at innovative ways to optimise water use. Local farmers will talk about how they are overcoming the challenges they face and working together to come up with innovative irrigation solutions for the future.



Keynote speaker Stuart Styles, the Director of the Irrigation Training and Research Center from San Luis, California, will talk about how New Zealand's irrigation practices and regulatory regime compares to the rest of the world.

Ros Harvey, Manager Director of Innovative Australian AgTech business The Yield and co-founder of the Food Agility Cooperative Research Centre and the Knowledge Economy Institute will talk about how we can meet the world's requirement to provide 60 percent more food by 2050 to feed our growing population. She will discuss how we can meet this challenge without compromising the future and how technology can transform farming practices.

Panellists ANZ Rural Economist Con Williams, Vet, Dairy Farmer and Scientist Alison Dewes, Central Otago Mayor Tim Cardogan, Pioneer Energy Chief Executive Fraser Jonkers and Law Professor Jacinta Ruru will discuss the future of water catchment management with moderator Radio NZ Morning Report presenter Guyon Espiner.

To find out more about the conference and register to attend visit www.irrigationnz.co.nz

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Flying high for 30 years

Maxine Whiting and her team at House of Travel proudly serving Ashburton since 1987.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HOUSE OF TRAVEL



It's been 30 years since House of Travel first opened their doors on East Street and while there have been many changes since then their commitment to outstanding customer service and fantastic holidays still stands. Owner/operator Maxine Whiting was actually part of that original team in 1987 and five years ago took the plunge and bought the business outright. Thirty years ago, there were no computers or Internet and there was a lot more paper on her desk but regardless Maxine approaches all her customers the same way she did back in 1987; a friendly smile and a desire to help them plan the best holiday possible. "Every customer that comes into House of Travel is treated the same whether it's a weekend in Auckland or a two-month holiday around Europe." She confirms these days people are a lot more adventurous in their travel and with such competitive air fares available now trips overseas are no longer a "once in a lifetime" experience like they were back in 1987.

Maxine and her staff are vastly experienced and the fact that her shortest serving team member has been with her for five years speaks for itself. The team consists of Anna Schmack, Bronwyn Milne, Mandy Reid, Maxine Chisnall and Nathan Bartlett. "Everyone has a great passion for the industry and obviously we all like to travel ourselves and enjoy helping people make the most out of their holidays". She believes that first-hand knowledge is essential, and the team try and keep up with new travel trends. Nathan has just returned from Japan and Mandy recently spent time on the West Coast of USA and last year Maxine Whiting spent three weeks in Alaska—an experience she describes as "absolutely amazing". Cruising is also increasing in popularity she says "it's such a relaxed way to

travel—you only have to unpack once!" She is also keen to add that the agency is happy to organise the shorter and nearby trips – they even book Intercity bus trips for your convenience.

Extensive travel knowledge is one of the many benefits of booking with the House of Travel team. House of Travel nationwide has won best brand at the TAANZ travel awards for the past 5 years which is testament to their excellence and passion for travel. Their personal service has important advantages over online booking websites. Maxine and her staff are available 24/7 if something should go wrong while on holiday and they are part of the TAANZ network that guarantees consumer protection. They often meet customers out of office hours if necessary and she confirms they go out of their way to ensure every customer has the best travel experience "holidays are a really important part of peoples lives, most people only get four weeks a year and those weeks are precious."

As part of the Ashburton community for thirty years House of Travel often meets with generations of the same family and still has the same clients booking holidays thirty years on. They enjoy working with their clients as their travel tastes change—clients in the early days may have booked a back-packing style trip and now that they are older and have more funds they are able to enjoy luxury travel and accommodation and it's their children who will



ABOVE: Maxine Whiting, owner/operator of Ashburton's House of Travel

MAIN IMAGE: The House of Travel team from left, Anna Schmack, Mandy Reid, Nathan Bartlett, Maxine Chisnall, Bronwyn Milne

use HOT to organise their OE travel. "People are extremely loyal to the brand and us and we really appreciate that," Maxine says. House of Travel Ashburton will be celebrating their incredible 30-year anniversary during November and will be inviting clients to celebrate this great achievement with them. In the meantime, if you have any travel ideas in mind, pop in and meet the HOT team—before you know it you could be packing your bags safe in the knowledge your holiday is in the hands of the very best experts in town.

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Smart water use over summer

An estimated 26% of stock drinking water is lost as leakage, say DairyNZ Research Technician Caleb Higham, based on research he carried out on over 100 farms.

“This wastes valuable water, causes areas of mud and flooding, and incurs extra pumping costs.” WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY DAIRYNZ



LEFT: Bucket test
BELOW LEFT: DairyNZ Research Technician Caleb Higham water testing



As the demand on water resources in New Zealand grows, efficient practices around water use are essential. Over summer this can become more challenging, but there are smart ways to save water, money and time.

Reviewing your water use and making sure your systems are working properly in advance of the hotter months is a good start. Having leak detection systems and established procedures for dealing with leaks is important over the holidays, when farm managers or owners may be away. All staff should know how to manage leaks and how to shut off the water if necessary.

On non-irrigated farms, summer is the best time to focus on fixing leaks. Caleb says fast leaks are usually noticed immediately and fixed quickly, but slow, low rate leaks are often not detected

for a long time because the water system can cope with the leak. “They are generally only detected when they become a major leak, or in summer when green patches are noticed in brown paddocks. While they are slow leaks, the volume of water adds up.”

One of the best ways to detect slow leaks and monitor water use is to have a water meter. This will help to track seasonal and annual consumption, detect where water can be saved, and identify water efficiency options on-farm. A water meter is a valuable feature of any farm striving for sustainable water use. Detailed information about using water meters is available on the DairyNZ website.

Increased competition for water means the whole community is looking at how irrigators use

water. Good irrigation not only benefits the wider community, but individual farms too, where it helps pasture grow better, providing more feed for animals. Whatever the chosen system, it should maximise the amount of pasture grown while using as little water as possible.

On irrigated farms, once irrigation season begins, it is important to keep an eye on soil moisture readings and weather forecasts. The biggest opportunity to improve how efficiently water is used is by irrigation scheduling, especially during the shoulders of the season. If you can stop irrigating for a day when rain is predicted, you will make significant water savings.

Applying the right amount of water at the right time to get maximum growth from pasture is crucial. Put on too much water and it drains away below the pasture, leaches out some of your expensive nutrients and slows pasture growth. Leave it too late, and the plants may stress, which reduces growth rates. Watering tracks and other non-productive areas wastes water.

Maintaining and managing your irrigation system will minimise wastage and leaks. Leaks can reduce the operating pressure so that the system doesn't apply water evenly, leading to patchy growth of pasture.

“Carrying out a ‘bucket test’ is the easiest way to work out on-farm the application depth, rate and how uniformly water is being applied during an irrigation event,” says Caleb. “The ‘bucket test’ method is based on collecting irrigation water in strategically placed buckets and measuring what water is collected over a certain period of time.” The Check It Bucket Test app, which is used in conjunction with a bucket test kit, can be downloaded for free at www.irrigationnz.co.nz. Check water flow rates are suitable to supply enough water to stock in the peak of summer. Providing enough water to stock is essential for high milk production. You can download Farmfact 5–19, about the management of stock drinking water at www.dairynz.co.nz/water-quality.

Find out how your farm's water use compares to others in your region and throughout New Zealand by using DairyNZ's online Water Use Calculator at </water-use-calc>.

Find out more about saving water in the milking shed at </water-use-shed>.

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Clean burning LPG brings energy option

Ruralco Cardholders seeking an alternative energy source for a variety of farm energy needs will welcome the move by Genesis into the bulk and bottled LPG gas market.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE



The energy company is finalising its move into the market late this year with the recent purchase of the Nova LPG business from the Todd Corporation. This makes Genesis the second largest player in the gas sector behind Contact Energy.

The move enables Genesis to leverage off its existing electricity supply customer base, and also to utilise Nova's established distribution network to expand upon that market share throughout both urban and rural centres.

Genesis Business Sales Manager Rudolph Linde says Genesis is possibly best known for its high-profile generation assets, including Huntly power station up north, Tongariro Power Development, Waikaremoana Hydro Scheme, Hau Nui Wind Farm and the Tekapo assets in the Mackenzie country.

But the acquisition of Nova's LPG business brings Genesis firmly into the national LPG market as a major player, and by the end of December he says the new company branding will be easily recognised.

"Nova had a supply network through Canterbury but had not been overly active in the rural market. But we have invested in building a team who truly understand our rural customer community to grow the business and build new customer relationships, including within the rural sector," he says.

The company is not only looking to build relationships with farm businesses, but also the many service and tourism businesses that make up rural communities today, including hospitality, accommodation and rural service businesses

needing energy supplies including gas, electricity and solar.

The acquisition of the Nova LPG business means Genesis can offer the LPG in a variety of container sizes. These range from the usual 7kg home barbeque bottle to typical home supply 45kg canisters. But larger volumes can also be supplied through bulk stored 222kg and even 5t tank storage volumes.

Rudolph points to a number of advantages LPG brings within the farm gate.

"Arable farmers in particular appreciate LPG is a cheaper and cleaner fuel source for drying grain than diesel. There is no potential to damage or taint the crop when drying, storage is spill free, and importantly safe from theft."

Burner maintenance and clogging is reduced using clean burning LPG and its combustion process reduces the risk of grain combustion during the drying process, while the risk of water egress and sediment contaminating the drying process is also eliminated.

"You also have a high degree of control over the heat intensity, meaning it is easier to dry the grain down to the exact specifications customers may require."

Its flexibility as a fuel source means it can be run through flat, bin or portable driers.

As heavy users of hot water for dairy shed wash down, dairy farmers will also appreciate the benefits of LPG.

The Genesis team can advise on installing gas supply on farm that will provide "on demand" hot water heated more efficiently and only to the volumes required for the particular task.

Gas supplies can also be integrated into farm delivery for staff and management houses on the properties as a safe, efficient and clean means of providing water and dwelling heating energy.

Genesis is also working closely with Longveld Engineering in Hamilton that developed a heating system tailored to dairy farms' water heating needs. The venture means Genesis will be able to offer tailored solutions relevant to farmers' specific needs.

"And of course aligning ourselves with respected rural service suppliers Ruralco means we can broaden our rural business network."

"We also have a team of 20 sales staff nationally, including staff in Canterbury and Southland-Otago."

The Genesis team is highly experienced with 70 combined years in the bulk LPG team, 40 years in the agri team and 50 years in the small to medium business supply sector.

Now with 46% ownership of the Kupe gas field off the coast of Taranaki, Genesis can offer consistency in its gas supply to consumers and businesses, with long term security of supply.

Ruralco's Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon welcomes the integration of Nova LPG into Genesis and the increased opportunities it signals for shareholders.

"It means we are partnered up with a multi energy source supplier that can offer LPG as a viable energy supply on farm. This gives farmers the option for LPG alongside electricity for water heating, giving them more flexibility and certainty that they will always have an energy source on hand."

The convenience of having tailored energy solutions will make managing ordering and delivery far simpler for farmers, and they will also appreciate having the invoice charged directly to their Ruralco account.

"There are also likely to be some good options for deals and contracts that we can develop with Genesis to get the best deals possible for our shareholders as the relationship develops," says Tracey.

Contact Tracey Gordon on 0800 787 256 to find out more and discuss the best option for your farm.

United Wheat Growers adds certainty to crop's future

For 30 years United Wheat Growers (UWG) has been the quiet backstop for the industry's wheat growers, providing crop cover insurance that is as unique as it is valued by the growers.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE , IMAGES BY GEORGE WALKER, AMY PIPER AND SUPPLIED BY FEDERATED FARMERS

Providing peace of mind to growers who face a continual risk of crop loss from unforeseen weather events has been UWG's main reason for existing. Growers have long appreciated not having to pay the insurance until their crop has been harvested, a rarity for any crop insurance scheme.

UWG has also help build and foster strong funding, quality and research links within the industry, aligning with Foundation for Arable Research with input to ongoing and proposed research projects, and working behind the scenes with Federated Farmers on issues affecting the arable sector.

UWG's four directors exemplify the skills and commitment that underscore the small but vibrant grain sector, each bringing valuable input and cropping perspective to guiding UWG's future.



Brian Leadley

Diversity delivers for quality and risk.

The diversity of Canterbury's modern cropping scheme is not more apparent than it is upon Brian Leadley's 430ha property north of Ashburton.

The United Wheat Growers (UWG) chairman has about a third of his farm committed to cereal production every year, along with a lamb fattening operation and growing seed crops to act as break crops, all adding up to a balanced, productive arable portfolio on the spray irrigated property.

Brian's cereal commitments focus mainly on wheat with some barley, growing the Duchess and Discovery milling varieties over the past few seasons.

He sees a level of positivity in the wheat sector that was missing a couple of years ago, and despite strong global stocks, believes values are likely to remain positive for delivering good grower returns over the coming season.

"The prices had bottomed out about two years ago to the point of being unsustainable. Now domestically sourced wheat is being recognised for its consistent quality and the biosecurity assurance it offers processors."

He believes there may even be a risk this year supplies will run tight prior to the next harvest this summer.

"The lower prices we saw two years ago meant people have probably been planting a little less than they usually did," he says.

Brian finds the "niche" seed crops invaluable as an alternative income source and providing a good break crop option within the cereal programme to help with soil health and weed control.

"The trick with the seed crops is to ensure you have them well isolated from the other crops, to prevent seed cross-contamination."

"We find we can manage that well. We also benefit by having wheat and barley in the crop rotation with them, bringing cleaner paddocks for when it comes time to plant with vegetables."

"Herbicide resistance is also becoming more of a concern, so those crops give us the ability to vary our rotation and therefore reduce our risk of resistance developing."

He will also regularly plant 40–50ha of peas for processing, and like all growers in the region has a nervous eye on how the pea weevil monitoring in the Wairarapa is playing out.

"We are obviously hopeful they can control it, they are running a catch crop again up there and monitoring nets in the area and beyond to ensure it has not spread."



With about a third of the farm in grass, the lamb operation is also a key focus and proving profitable as lamb prices start to approach the \$7/kg mark.

"Fattening them through winter fits in well, and they have been providing a valuable additional income source, with good prospects going forward," he says.

Farming in the Red Nutrient Allocation Zone, the farm subscribes to Overseer nutrient calculations and a Farm Environment Plan.

Brian is a shareholder in the Barrhill Chertsey irrigation scheme, so the farm environment plan feeds into the scheme's consent.

He is also working within Good Management Practices, part of the farm environment plan audit process that includes soil testing for deep nitrogen levels.

"It has not had a great deal of effect upon our operation, our property came out well on the Overseer calculations, meaning we have been able to continue what we are doing."

Brian says the key strength for arable farmers in being part of UWG is the assurance of cover for crop loss.

"With any crop there is a risk factor and this underpins that. The beauty of the UWG

insurance is that all the risk is covered up front, and growers don't have to pay the levy cost until harvest time, significantly reducing the pressure on their cash demands prior to harvest. Very few other crop insurances have this sort of arrangement."

He has welcomed the growing strength of the annual wheat growing competition, helping bring some valuable profile to the industry, and particularly to Canterbury's skilled arable sector.

Processors and seed companies have come to recognise how valuable the competition is to showcase certain varieties and observe their performance.

The close liaison shared with Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) over the past 25 years has ensured that organisation has the full support of arable growers in all its research endeavours, a liaison Brian hopes will continue for years yet.

"UWG have tended to step out of the advocacy role, leaving that to Federated Farmers, and are happy for FAR to take the science lead. It is a very good three way partnership where we liaise and work closely with them."

Syd Worsfold

Cropping from paddock to plate.

The early ripening cropping country near Greendale provides UWG director and vice chairman Syd Worsfold with plenty of scope to pursue his goal of growing quality milling wheat year on year.

Syd has farmed in the district all his life, and has a strong standing within the arable farming community, including his 30 years on UWG council with four as president.

For the past eight years he has had plenty of support from his son Earl who farms alongside him on the family's 400ha cropping farm. With over a decade of year on year wheat growing history behind them, Syd believes he's "getting better at it" having identified the issues of fertility, disease and variety that can put the brakes on year to year wheat cropping.

"There have been some issues we have identified along the way. A while ago we identified copper deficiency affecting plant vigour, and have dealt with that. There's also tan-spot a disease caused by decaying stubble in the paddock."

However he maintains vigilant crop monitoring can identify crop problems early on, and can be dealt with effectively.

Specialising in continual supply of milling wheat is partly a labour of love for Syd. He enjoys the "paddock to plate" connection being a grower for milling supply brings with it. He divides his crop supply evenly between Christchurch's two large milling companies, getting on well with both.

"Being part of the supply chain, and knowing where your product is going, and what is happening to it, that is rewarding, compared to simply supplying a commodity style feed grain."

Supplying the milling industry also offers more volume certainty than what can come supplying the more volatile feed grain to the dairy sector.

The current preferred varieties for the early harvest country are Reliance and ViceRoy, recently upgraded to a "premium" grade milling variety.

Sticking with these varieties and committing to milling also helps him get better growing those varieties, year in year out.

"If we were just contracting to an agent we would not know what variety we get. It can change year to year, you do not know what you will get, and it's harder to get better at growing it."

Key harvest parameters for milling wheat are protein levels, grain size and quality.



Syd is proud about the quiet behind the scenes tasks the UWG have achieved over the years.

This includes establishing an industry wide quality assurance scheme all the processors, millers and other end users, working on standards that meet industry specs, rather than being driven by any single commercial focused goal.

That standardisation has been welcomed by processors seeking consistent quality grain supply.

"And that has been helped by having grain silos on farm for storing specific crops from specific paddocks. It's better than bulk supply of grain that may meet the average requirements across the total amount, but may still have significant variances in quality within it, coming from multiple paddocks, or even multiple farms."

Syd is keen to see UWG continuing to champion the industry with the annual wheat growers' competition, and believes Canterbury arable farmers are well placed as niche crop growers.

"I would love to see a few more varieties, including some pasta varieties grown here—there are a lot of niche opportunities out there."

He also appreciates the excellent level of research co-operation within the sector to help identify those opportunities. That commitment had him involved in getting the Foundation for Arable Research established 25 years ago.

"I also sit on an industry committee with everyone in the supply chain present, where we can discuss quality and production issues and how best to approach them, it is very constructive."

Michael Tayler

Wheat adds to cropper's diversity.

The cropping business UWG director Michael Tayler runs with his brother Nick highlights the level of diversity within the region's arable industry, and the depth of skill that belies a sector often flying beneath the rural radar.

Their cropping operation covers 800ha, spread between the home farm near Winchester, and another property at Rangitata Island.

The spread of location and the soil profile enables them to grow a wide variety of crops, specialising in potatoes and carrots and also growing higher value brassica seed crops, peas, forage and turf ryegrasses, wheat, barley and maize.

The operation also includes a stand-alone potato storage business for Bluebird Foods and a carrot washing operation, in partnership with a neighbour, for a juicing company based in Timaru. The brothers balance the investment in cropping with interests in two dairy equity partnerships in the region.

This season has proven to be a particularly challenging one for most cropping farmers around the country due to extremely wet soil conditions for most of the year. It was not until later in the spring that many parts of Canterbury eventually began to dry out and resemble "normal" conditions for planting.

"We started to catch up by late October, but it has been a tough year receiving almost all our annual rainfall by the end of August," says Michael.

The business supply's feed wheat to both the dairy and poultry sector and has been buoyed in the past year as dairy returns start to ramp up again.

The diversity of crops grown not only plays a valuable role in reducing income risk, but also in helping with longer rotations, particularly for the potatoes which are rarely sown more than once every five years in the same paddock.

It is a challenge each season finding new land to grow potatoes that enables that rotation space, and competition has grown for this land in recent years with Canterbury now producing almost half the country's total potato crop.

Like many in the industry Michael shares the concerns recently expressed by Horticulture NZ about the need to preserve the status of valuable cropping soils, in many cases threatened by the creep of urban sprawl and an ever growing need for more houses.



A recent Horticulture NZ report highlighted the loss of over 10,000ha of high value soil land to "other uses" that is unlikely to be returned, and this puts greater pressure on growers to find alternative areas while also facing the constraints of nutrient caps and water limitations.

Michael also sits on the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust which oversees the Nuffield and Kellogg's Scholarship programmes. He was awarded a Nuffield scholarship back in 2012.

His study focused on new technologies in arable farming, an area that has since accelerated quickly as sensing technology and advances in connectivity have all ramped up.

In his work assessing candidates for the scholarships he now notices a greater focus upon the environment and farming's role in helping preserve, or improve it.

His own farming operation incorporates a low –tillage cultivation system except for the potatoes and carrots which require intensive cultivation.

"We are actually now cultivating less than we used to in past years."

Like many of the arable farmers, Michael believes United Wheat Growers is an organisation with a low profile but its ability to offer insurance cover for wheat crops is not lost on anyone who has had to call on its cover.

As part of his role on the UWG board, Michael helps organise the annual wheat awards which are designed to celebrate the success and skill of our arable farmers as well as promoting the industry.

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

Guy Wigley

Putting cereals at front and centre.

Of the four United Wheat Growers (UWG) directors, Guy Wigley has wheat most at front and centre of his operation, with about half his 500ha Waimate property planted regularly in feed wheat crop.

A long time and passionate wheat grower, Guy is wholly and solely an arable operator, spreading the cropping portfolio this season between wheat, oil seed rape, grass seed and this year some feed barley.

The non-irrigated property is on a heavier clay loam that requires early planting for all his autumn sown crops, with oil seed usually sown by the third week of March and wheat in by the last week of March.

Over the past decade he has moved to focus more on feed wheat supply for the dairy sector, with the transport cost reducing the returns for milling wheat sent to Christchurch. He has long focused on harvesting wheat with a moisture level of 16-18%, with drying down facilitated by having ventilated drying floors, and focuses on growing wheat with a low sprouting risk.

"We also have a focus on autumn sown crops, including the oil seed rape. The oil seed is a crop I have particularly enjoyed growing over the past few years, we focus on putting a decent area of it in the ground.

"It is easier to do an extensive area, rather than a patchwork of varying crops, every day you have to harvest you have to make the most of it and you can lose too much time cleaning down the machine between crops." This year was something of an exception, he had 100ha that was not planted in autumn due to wet conditions, resulting in him sowing some spring barley for the first time, along with oil seed rape.

The return to reasonable dairy returns has bought the feed wheat market back up, and more dairy farmers are recognising the valuable role locally grown grain can play in helping balance herds' high protein ryegrass diets.

Guy has been a UWG board member for the past eight years and points to the group's insurance scheme as a key asset for wheat growers nationwide.

With its "no excess" payment on crop losses it provides peace of mind in the risky business of crop growing, casting a net of assurance over the 300,000t of wheat grown every year.

"We have a very good relationship with Farmers Mutual Group (FMG) who underwrite the scheme. For growers like myself, it is the only crop I insure, but it helps strike a balance between crop over and under insurance."

The UWG's electoral college of fellow grain growers are spread throughout the country



and are tasked with the role of assessing crop losses as they arise.

Guy says UWG is aiming to continue promoting the value of locally grown grain to the dairy sector in particular, and the importance of having access to crops that are secure in both supply and biosecurity standards.

Continuing to work with Foundation for Arable Research on pushing yield levels higher and higher will also play a big part in maintaining the competitiveness of locally

supplied grains as they face the continual threat from imported supplies.

"We have come a long way when you look back. We started out with milling wheat yielding about 3.5t a hectare, and now there are growers achieving 10-12t a hectare.

"New Zealand has held the world record for wheat production on three occasions, and also for barley. We are right up the top end of achievement, and that has been underpinned by FAR's work."

Ruralco retains commitment to unique competition

Ruralco remains committed to UWG's annual wheat growing competition, and continues to invest significant time and funds to competition sponsorship, including publicising the event, helping select judges and working with farmers to get their entries submitted.

Ruralco Seed Sales Manager Craig Rodgers says the competition remains vital for showcasing the industry's skill and depth.

"The sector performs well above its weight and the growers who participate do much to highlight the skill and passion they bring to their sector."

Event sponsorship in 2017 came from Farmers Mutual Group (FMG), Carrfields Grain & Seed, alongside Orion AgriScience.

Splitting the competition into five categories has meant growers get a clear indication on where they are best to enter, based off their skills, crop and land type.

In past years Canterbury has continued to dominate, but entries are open to growers nationally, and organisers hope to ultimately see some Northern competition lining up soon.

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

The 2018 competition is open to crops harvested in 2018, with entries closing 31 May 2018 and judging taking place in autumn. A prize giving will follow in winter, with prize money up for grabs in all categories of the competition.

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			\$12,976.52	\$1,691.99	\$11,284.53	

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Combating poor summer pasture

There is a strong link between dropping pasture quality and declining stock growth rates.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY SEALESWINSLOW

It typically occurs towards the end of spring when fibre levels in the grass begin to rise. While this change can create havoc for the diet of your grazing animals, ruminant nutrition expert Paul Sharp explains that a little foresight can help minimise the impact. Regardless of whether you're farming sheep, beef cattle or dairy cows, good pasture is a cornerstone of the farming operation. All things being equal, much of the time it provides a balanced feed.

However, grass—like any other plant—goes through different growth stages, each of which has a bearing on its nutritional value. This becomes particularly noticeable in late spring and early summer: the grass plant transitions from vegetative growth, which promotes the production of leaves, to reproductive growth. The latter has the plant producing seed heads which requires higher fibre levels to physically support it.

"Fibre plays an important role for pasture plants as it gives the cell wall its structural strength," says Paul Sharp, SealesWinslow Science Extension Officer. "When the plant grows a seed head, more fibre is required to reinforce the elongated stem allowing the seed head to push upwards." The same goes for older grass plants which compete for light with surrounding plants, hence the longer stems.

The proportion of leaf to stem in pasture is important as it makes a big difference to the acid detergent fibre (ADF) and neutral detergent fibre (NDF) concentrations in grazed pastures.

"ADF is composed of lignin and cellulose which basically represent the less digestible fractions of the plants," explains Paul. "NDF, on the other hand, includes ADF and hemicellulose which restricts the feed intake but is more readily digestible."

He points out that higher fibre levels have a two-fold effect: firstly, the reduced digestibility drives down the energy level in each kgDM of the diet; and secondly it slows the speed at which the animal can harvest the pasture and process it through the rumen. This means the stock feels full after eating lower levels of pasture and consequently consumes less pasture.

In practice it means that animals eat less and also get less energy from the feed they are eating as the MJME/kg DM declines. For dairy cows an unmanaged, high-fibre pasture heading into summer can cause declines in milk production by up to a staggering 15% per month compared to less than 2% for well managed diets, much of which can be attributed to quality and quantity of feed. Young beef animals are also affected as their

daily food intake struggles to get beyond 2.2% of liveweight (compared to the required 3% for high growth rates). For lambs the voluntary feed intake can similarly decline to around 3% of liveweight (compared to a desirable 4%).

So how can you best minimise these unwelcome effects of increased fibre levels in pasture?

Paul favours a holistic approach with a three-pronged response. "First of all, start with the basics and keep focus on maintaining good pasture residuals, adopt faster rotational grazing speeds," he suggests. "Allow your animals to graze on the younger pasture and reserve longer pasture with higher fibre content for use as silage."

"Secondly, make sure that your pasture maintenance program includes regular nitrogen applications to promote leaf growth." Lastly, he recommends providing nutritional support by way of high-energy supplements such as pelleted meals. "It helps maintain daily energy intakes while also boosting the level of protein to counter the reduced crude protein levels contained in the more fibrous pasture."

For dairy and beef cattle SealesWinslow's Hi Starch works very well due to its high energy density, whereas lambs can often benefit from a barley pellet when pasture quality is not able to be maintained in top condition.

With a little planning, these strategies can be simply incorporated into the farm system, and will go a long way to combating the effects of high-fibre summer pasture.

Contact Ruralco Farm Supplies today or your SealesWinslow technical sales representative to discuss your specific situation or visit www.sealeswinslow.co.nz.



Riparian strips: What do you need?

Riparian strips or buffers are used to improve water quality and improve biodiversity, either by reducing the risk of contaminants entering the waterway through surface runoff or by shading waterways to reduce algal blooms and provide conditions suited to instream biodiversity. WORDS BY NICK PYKE, FAR

The riparian planting also needs to allow high flows so it doesn't cause flooding. What you are aiming to achieve with a riparian zone will influence what is planted and how it is managed.

With the concern about water quality it is expected that most riparian strips will be

designed to reduce the flow of contaminants into the waterway. Some of the key points to consider if you are developing a riparian strip are:

- Four main contaminants can enter waterways from farmland; nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and faecal matter.

- Sediment is the largest source of P entering streams.
- Phosphate saturation within a riparian strip needs to be controlled through some sort of annual harvest of the vegetation around streams and drains.



A problem with most riparian strips is that they will eventually become saturated with nutrients and thus become inefficient. This occurs because the soil can only hold a certain amount of nutrients. A number of riparian planting experiments have been conducted over a small number of years and there is a marked drop in nutrients entering streams in the early years as nutrients demand of the new young plantings is high. However, at some point, the soil in the riparian strip will reach phosphate saturation, and at this point the only way to remove phosphorus from a riparian strip is to harvest the area thus moving nutrients out of the zone. This can include grazing or cutting of grass, or harvesting of products.

Planting slow growing native plants may be good for shading the stream, but will not help a great deal with phosphate uptake and will provide limited reduction of sediment run-off.

“Grasses in riparian strips have been shown to be more effective than forest, native or wetland riparian strips at trapping sediment from entering the streams.”

Grasses in riparian strips are the most effective (compared with forest, native or wetland riparian strips) at trapping sediment on stream banks. Research shows that 91% of incoming sediment through a grass filter strip was deposited in the first 0.6m. The best strips are considered to be tall, dense grasses planted perpendicular adjacent to the stream on relatively flat paddocks. The slope up paddock of the riparian strip determines the velocity of the runoff as it enters the riparian strip. The greater the slope, the larger the area needed to trap the sediment. Research has shown that a 0.6m wide grass strip, at a slope of 10%, will reduce soil loss between 63% and 85%, depending on the cultivation practice on the surrounding land. Bear in mind that 10% is fairly steep and so, unlikely to be cultivated.

Other research has shown that a wider strip of 9.1m strip was only 85% effective. There was no significant increase in effectiveness in riparian strips wider than that.

Nitrogen is the only nutrient that cannot be effectively trapped by a small riparian strip. This is because it is easily leached into the water through sub-surface drainage. Riparian strips can be effective at reducing contaminant flow to streams, but it is important to determine the purpose of the riparian strip prior to planting and then select the species, width and management of the strip relative to the site.

- Sediment entering streams can be easily reduced (91% reduction has been recorded) by a tall, narrow grass strip (0.6m) as long as the slope is not too great.
- Grasses in riparian strips have been shown to be more effective than forest, native or wetland riparian strips at trapping sediment from entering the streams.
- To reliably prevent nitrogen from entering streams, the riparian strip would have to be between 20–30m wide.
- Grazing stock near streams can result not only in high applications of urine (nitrogen) and faeces (phosphate) into streams, but it also in erosion of banks.
- Erosion can be significantly reduced by ensuring a dense plant population along banks.

The main pathways for contaminants entering streams are surface runoff, sub surface drains, erosion, stock in streams, and discharges from oxidation ponds.

“The increase in phosphate in streams is very closely related to the amount of sediment in a stream.”

The increase in phosphate in streams is very closely related to the amount of sediment in a stream. This implies that the main source of phosphate in streams is from sediment, as P binds strongly to soil particles. Other sources include stock in streams, which can be fenced off, and sub-surface drainage.

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Marking a milestone: 30 years of endophyte R&D

Many farmers know New Zealand is a world leader in ryegrass endophyte research and development. WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY AGRISEEDS

What you may not know, however, is that Agriseeds was the first company in the Southern Hemisphere to begin researching and developing ryegrass endophytes 30 years ago.

The company's involvement with endophyte actually dates back even further, to the days of Ellett ryegrass in the 1970s, but at that time no-one knew much about endophytes, their effect on animals or their role in pasture persistence.

Agriseeds today it markets more endophytes than any other company in New Zealand.

These include both its own NEA family (NEA2, NEA and the new NEA4) and AgResearch-licensed AR endophytes (AR1 and AR37).

NEA is a unique group of endophytes which the company first discovered in 1991. The research

behind this breakthrough began in 1987, however, and continues today.

Collectively, the NEA family now accounts for much of the total NZ ryegrass endophyte market.

"We believe they provide the best combination of animal health and insect control that you can buy," explains Agriseeds science manager Colin Eady.

NEA2 endophyte was first launched to farmers in Tolosa perennial ryegrass in 2001, and is now available in Trojan and Rohan.

NEA comes in Shogun hybrid ryegrass and Agriseeds' newest endophyte NEA4 will be launched this autumn in tetraploid perennial Viscout.

Because they pose very little risk of ryegrass staggers in sheep, beef cattle and dairy cows, they

have an outstanding animal safety record.

This comes with good control of key pests like Argentine stem weevil and black beetle to support pasture persistence.

Colin Eady says all the NEA endophytes available have been put through a lengthy NZ trial programme to ensure they perform the way the company says they will, both in terms of animal safety and insect resistance.

"These trials are on-going as we develop new ryegrass/endophyte combinations for the future."

Animal safety is measured using lambs which are grazed on different pastures over eight-week blocks at the height of summer.

These trials contain one treatment known to cause severe staggers (Standard endophyte)



and one that is known to have no effect on animal health (AR1 or nil endophyte). Both are compared to lambs grazing new lines with an NEA endophyte.

Sheep are used because they are more susceptible to ryegrass staggers than cattle, and higher numbers can be run on the same area, providing more robust statistical data.

Every year, lambs grazing ryegrass with Standard endophyte exhibit signs of staggers to a greater or lesser degree. Every two to three years, this is severe enough for the lambs to be removed for welfare reasons.

By contrast, Colin Eady says, "since 1988, we have never seen severe staggers in lambs grazing ryegrass with NEA2; NEA, which is the endophyte in Shogun or NEA4, which is our new endophyte." Nor has the company ever had a reported case of ryegrass staggers on any NEA endophyte grazed by dairy cows, cattle or sheep.

To be included in the animal safety rankings collectively administered by the pan-industry Endophyte Technical Committee, each endophyte must be in three animal safety trials.

It's a similar story for insect testing, which is also

undertaken by the company each year.

This involves both pot and plot trials. The bioassay pot trials are conducted in a highly controlled environment, and assess different ryegrass/endophyte combinations for their tolerance to predation by black beetle, Argentine stem weevil, root aphid and pasture mealy bug.

Plot trials better reflect real-world farm pasture conditions, but can take longer, because researchers effectively must wait for the insects to show up.

"It comes down to that question of persistence. In many of our trials we've sought out farms with known pasture persistence problems, and placed our material there."

Again, every ryegrass/endophyte combination Agriseeds considers for commercial release is put through this protocol. Tests have been running since 1991, and will continue as long as the company pursues endophyte discovery, Colin Eady says.

Other endophyte investment is ongoing.

Since 2006, Agriseeds has been involved in endophyte research and discovery at the Molecular Plant Breeding Cooperative Research

ABOVE: Endophyte trial covered pots
ABOVE LEFT: Colin Eady, Agriseeds Science Manager

Centre in Victoria, and has now genotyped 400 separate endophytes.

In November 2017 the company also opened a new 2,000 square metre cool store capable of holding 1,500 tonnes of seed.

Located at its seed distribution hub at Rolleston, this is fitted with a computerised climate control system which keeps its contents at no more than 8°C, with relative humidity of below 50%.

Colin Eady says these are the optimum conditions for keeping endophyte alive and healthy inside ryegrass seed.

"This is a perishable fungus—it needs to be stored in the right environment so the seed arrives on farms with high levels of live endophyte present."

"The new cool store is a vital part of infrastructure for ensuring seed quality, and for our future with endophyte technology."

For more detail visit www.agriseeds.co.nz or talk to Ruralco Seed.

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Healthy workers = safe workers!

New Zealand experiences a high rate of work related disease—we've experienced consistent numbers for about the past 20 years.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS



WorkSafe NZ report that between 600 to 900 people a year die from disease that has resulted from the work that they carry out. More than 80% of that are men, and about 50% of deaths are from cancer. They also report about 30,000 a year suffer from work-related health conditions or disease—and about a fifth of these end up in hospital. In 2004, the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee presented a report which estimated that there were roughly 700—1000 deaths a year from occupational disease, particularly cancer, respiratory disease and ischaemic heart disease and that there are 17,000–20,000 new cases of work related disease reported each year.

“Exposure to sun, noise, dust, chemicals, substances, vibration, stress, fatigue and animals can disrupt the way our body’s work.”

The issue is that a lot of these diseases are termed ‘latent diseases’—that means it can take days, months or even years for these work-related illness or disease to become visible.

The agriculture industry factors high into this rate of illness and disease. Exposure to sun, noise, dust, chemicals, substances, vibration, stress, fatigue and animals can disrupt the way our body’s work. This can

lead to things like respiratory failure, hearing, skin conditions, zoonoses, occupational cancers, cardiovascular disease, ongoing musculoskeletal conditions and mental health concerns.

One of the focuses of the Health & Safety at Work Act is to try and remedy this—to keep you the farmer, and your workers, well and healthy. Because try as we might it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate these hazards. Majority of these mean we provide our workers with safety gear. This means that we need to consider the requirement to monitor our workers’ health. This is now a requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and General Risk and Workplace Management Regulations 2016. This requirement is part of your duty of care as a PCBU - to monitor worker health as far as is reasonably practicable if exposure to a health risk warrants it. The results are an important step to make sure the safety gear that you are using, is working!

What is Health Monitoring?

Put simply, Health Monitoring means keeping a check on your workers’ health to identify any changes because of exposure to certain hazards from doing their everyday work. Health Monitoring can include lung function tests, hearing tests, vision checks, blood tests and drug and alcohol testing. All Health Monitoring must be carried out by a Doctor/Registered Nurse or Nurse Practitioner

with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience. Workers must be consulted about the testing to be carried out and sign a consent prior.

A typical health monitoring regime would involve:

- Identifying all the environmental hazards workers may face;
- Sending workers for a ‘baseline’ medical test within three months of them starting work;
- An annual health check to see if exposure is worsening their health.

Wellness?

Monitoring can also aim to detect early signs of ill health or disease (i.e. diabetes) by including other wellness checks around blood pressure, BMI, cholesterol and glucose. This testing is not part of the legal requirement. However, it is the area that can identify current illnesses or warning signs for other illnesses. It is a worker’s wellness, or general health, that can directly affect their ability to work well, or simply function well, in daily life. Mental health is also a large part of this wellness as sustained stress or fatigue can have a negative impact on health and wellness.

“Mental health is also a large part of this wellness as sustained stress or fatigue can have a negative impact on health and wellness.”

Wellness can improve the health of workers by encouraging healthy habits, which can prevent, or lower the risk, of serious health conditions developing. Wellness is linked to greater productivity, less absenteeism and fewer sick days for the employer and increased self-confidence and overall life satisfaction for workers.

Ensuring your workers are fit for work – that is they can physically, and mentally, perform the tasks that you are assigning to them competently and safely – is paramount.

For more information to help you get this health and safety business sorted contact Compliance Partners: Jane Fowles on 021 942 150 (Town) or Lisa Norrie on 021 947 730 (Country).

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

TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



FINISH

- Hot dipped galvanised

STANDARD SIZES

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

STANDARD FEATURES

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

EXTRAS

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

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- 2400 x 1500mm (8x5)

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- Sprinkles of your choice
- Candy Canes
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1–2 tablespoons milk
- Green food colouring
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METHOD:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a 24cm square baking tin with greaseproof paper.
2. Snap the chocolate into a large bowl, add the butter and place over a pot of simmering water, until melted, stirring regularly.
3. Sift the cocoa powder and flour into a separate bowl, add the baking powder and sugar, then mix together.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the chocolate and stir together well. Beat the eggs, then mix in until you have a silky consistency.
5. Pour the brownie mix into the baking tin, and place in the oven for around 25 minutes. You don't want to overcook them so, unlike cakes, you don't want a skewer to come out clean—the brownies should be slightly springy on the outside but still gooey in the middle.
6. Allow to cool in the tray, then carefully transfer to a large chopping board and cut into triangles. Now, cut off the straight end of the candy cane and place it in the bottom of the brownie triangle to form the trunk of the tree.
7. For the icing, mix powdered sugar, vanilla, milk and green food colouring.
8. Fill zip lock bag with icing and cut the corner. Then begin to decorate by zig-zagging the icing up the tree.
9. Add your choice of sprinkles to finish the look.



Paper Plate Angels

YOU WILL NEED:

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Gold/silver/red glitter
- Paper
- Gold sparkly pipe cleaner
- Tape/hot glue gun
- Pink crayon and sharpie

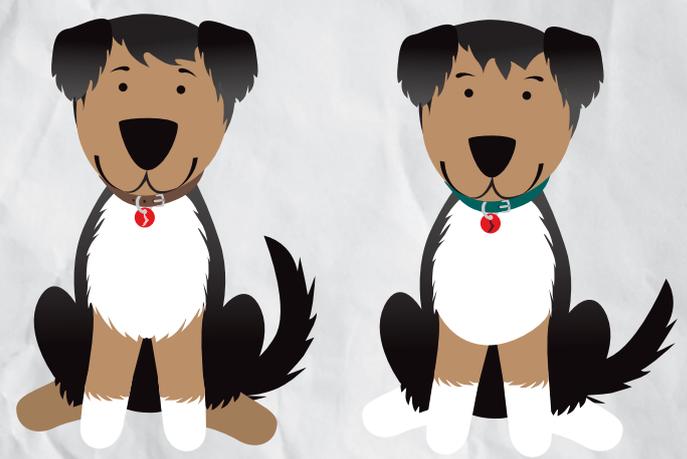
METHOD

1. Start by cutting a deep triangle out of a white paper plate.
2. Put lines of glue all around the plate and shake gold glitter on it.
3. Cut out the angels face using paper and add facial features using the sharpie. Then, cut out the hair and hands on a different coloured piece of paper.
4. Bend a gold pipe cleaner to look like a halo and tape it to the back of the head.
5. Add some rosy pink cheeks and you're done.



Spot the difference

Can you notice any differences between the two pictures below? There are 10 to be found.





Colour in the picture of Rufus at Christmas

Once completed, get it to Ruralco by **22 December** and you'll be in to win great prizes!

NAME

AGE

MEMBER NO.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- There are two age groups and prize packs allocated per age group: age 4–7 and age 8–11.
- Please ensure the family Ruralco account number, age and name of the entrant is submitted with the entry.
- All entries must be received by Ruralco no later than 4.30pm, 22 December 2017. Either drop it in to any of the Ruralco stores or post to PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740.
- Winners will be announced on 18 January 2018.
- One entry per child only.
- Ruralco reserves the right to publish all entries and details of the winners. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Once the judging has taken place, winners will be notified by telephone.
- The prize is not transferable or exchangeable and Ruralco reserves the right to change the prize to the same or equal value at any time if the prize becomes unavailable. No responsibility accepted for late, lost or misdirected entries.

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

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Personalised energy advice just for you

When is the last time you took a close look at your electricity accounts? When did you last review your energy plans? Are you getting the best pricing solution for your farm? Ruralco Energy is here to make managing your energy accounts easy by continuing to work with our partners—Meridian, Genesis 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 to get an energy price comparison on your accounts.

Vodafone Email Service Ceasing operations

As of the 30th November 2017, Vodafone New Zealand will be stopping their email service indefinitely. To avoid missing out on any important Ruralco updates and communication, make sure you let us know your new email address by contacting us on 0800 787 256 or ruralco@ruralco.co.nz.

The following Vodafone email services will be closing:

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Get your Ruralco Card ready and head to Ashburton on Thursday 7 December to get all of your Christmas shopping sorted. Ruralco and our suppliers are once again bringing you exclusive specials including extra discounts, exclusive one-off deals and much more for one day only from 9am to 8pm.

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