

# RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

JUNE / JULY 2019

Ridge top  
farm delivers  
on quality

Venison  
finds niche  
in Chinese  
megacity

The sport  
of kings

Cereal crop  
management

Effluent ponds—  
how much storage  
do you need?





# From the Group CEO

## Welcome to this edition of Real Farmer.

Our venison feature definitely takes us from the farm gate to plate as we move from the deer operations of Mt Hutt Station and Northbank Station, via Mountain River Venison and on to Rata Trading, a small company carving a niche for Canterbury grown venison in the restaurants of Shanghai. New Zealander and Shanghai resident, Hunter McGregor, shares his insights and journey of introducing this meat to a consumer more familiar with deer velvet than venison.

We also talk to Windy Ridge Farm dairy farmer and milk marketer, Andrew Moir about his venture into fresh milk processing. Based at Benhar, near Balclutha, Andrew's milk brand extends into Dunedin and parts of Central Otago with customers buying the milk in returnable glass bottles. Initially he started selling raw milk, but tighter regulations saw him shift to pasteurising his milk three years ago and it's a move he doesn't regret.

On a lighter note, we also take a look at what was once a sport associated with the rich and famous, but has undergone something of a resurgence in New Zealand with club numbers on the rise, and a strong Schools and Universities Polo Association which is introducing a whole new generation to the sport of polo.

In other exciting news, the 25th year of Instore Days are upon us! Come along for fantastic deals, great food and even better company. Lock the dates in your calendar—4 & 5 July 2019.

To celebrate 25 years of Instore Days, we have \$250,000 in prizes to giveaway, including a Ford Mustang, Harley Davidson, Fi-GLASS Dominator 90HP Boat, Spa, Jet Ski and the list goes on. Make sure you are in to win! It's simple, just spend with our partners and you are automatically in the draw. We look forward to celebrating this fantastic milestone with you all.

In the meantime, happy reading and we hope you enjoy meeting our Real Farmers.

**Rob Sharkie**  
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# RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

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**ON THE COVER:**  
Windy Ridge Farm dairy farmer and milk marketer, Andrew Moir

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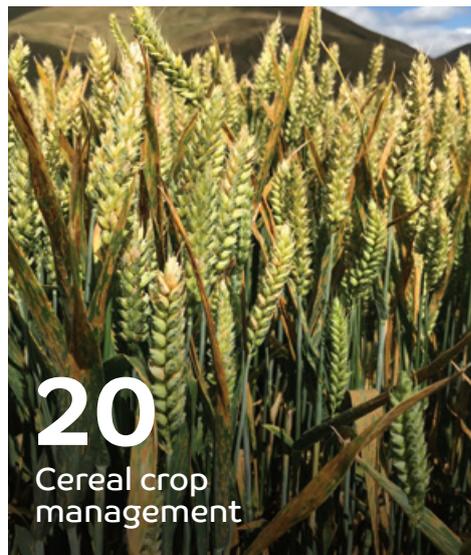
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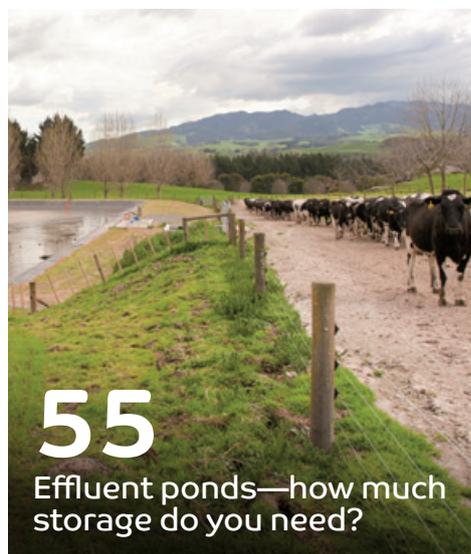
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IMAGE: The "Windy Ridge Farm" milk brand is supported by Andrew's 65 well-fed Kiwi-cross cows on his property at Benhar, near Balclutha

# Ridge top farm delivers on quality

Any dairy farmer will attest there are usually not enough hours in the day for much of the year between milking, feeding out, irrigating and book work, most days can seem a couple of hours short at least. Imagine then adding in processing, bottling and marketing your own milk as a dairy farmer, and that is very much a day in the life of Windy Ridge Farm dairy farmer and milk marketer Andrew Moir.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY MEGAN GRAHAM

Andrew's venture in fresh milk processing and marketing stem from a graduated career through the dairy industry, one that has had him move up the scale in terms of cow numbers, and now back down again with his 65 well fed Kiwi-cross cows on his property at Benhar, near Balclutha.

His dairying career spans 25 years and has taken the traditional route of wages-contracting-sharemilking right through to farm ownership. It is a pathway less common in the larger farm-corporate structures more common today, but one he believes served him well to get him onto his own property today.

"I started off as a mechanic, but have always been keen on farming, and started off on wages. It was during my sharemilking job I bought this block as a runoff. When the sharemilking job ended I moved here, I had already been in the process of converting it to an 80 cow dairy unit."



His dairying career has included managing large herds, and he professes to enjoying working with smaller herds, getting more time to follow up on cow performance and herd health.

"Even sharemilking, I think the happiest was when we milked 400 cows, it's a good size to run, you get a bit of everything in your day."

Six years ago he was up and running on the Benhar farm, and while supplying Open Country Cheese, was also selling raw milk at the gate to locals.

The raw milk business has proven to be a fraught one for farmers wanting the option to sell it at the gate, with regulations around its sale tightened significantly two years ago.

ABOVE: Today the "Windy Ridge Farm" brand extends into Dunedin & parts of Central Otago as one litre returnable glass bottles of full cream traditional milk  
BELOW: Andrews enjoys working with smaller herds, getting more time to follow up on cow performance and herd health

The new rules included a registration process for all suppliers in New Zealand, and came as the sector weathered criticism for past disease outbreaks linked to sales.

In Timaru in 2014 there had been an outbreak of gastro-intestinal diseases linked back to raw milk sales, including campylobacter disease. Food safety experts were alarmed at the disease risk, identifying raw milk as a product that was falling through cracks in legislation around adequate policies on farm production and supply.

"The new standards to continue selling raw milk were needed, but they were also pretty restrictive," says Andrew.

They include rules around how you can deliver the milk, with customers who receive raw milk at home having to be there to receive it.

"And any customers who buy off you have to have their names recorded, and how much they have bought."

New Zealand remains one of the few countries where raw milk can still be sold.

But for Andrew the restrictions while in the interest of public health made the business a headache, with more intensive quality testing and strict procedures around milking hygiene and collection.





"There was also a three day 'use by' date, which limits it as well."

"What I did enjoy about the business, with the 30–40 customers I had, was the contact with them. But it required me to install a pasteuriser if I was to continue doing so."

Pasteurising the milk elevates the temperature to 65.6C for 10 minutes, usually through plated heat exchangers in order to destroy disease causing bacteria, including tuberculosis, salmonella, listeria and campylobacter common in livestock products.

He contracted Bmac Sheetmetal, an engineering firm in Invercargill experienced in dairy technology to develop a suitable pasteuriser, a process that took two years from concept to first production.

From this his "Windy Ridge Farm" milk brand was born, and today extends into Dunedin and parts of Central Otago as one litre returnable glass bottles of full cream traditional milk.

Customers can purchase their first bottle for \$7.00, then returning their rinsed empty bottle in exchange for another full bottle for \$3.50 a litre.

"I found after shifting to pasteurised milk that only a very few customers dropped off, we kept most simply because they liked buying our milk."

Three years down the track, it's a move he does not regret. "For us, despite the cost and headaches of getting set up, and working under what are still a tight set of rules, having the pasteuriser in place means the disease risk you always had with raw milk is reduced significantly. The difference in bacteria levels between raw and pasteurised is like night and day.

"A bacteria sample from raw milk typically has 15000 APC (aerobic plate count-bacteria indicator), compared to only 100 APC for pasteurised. It pretty much kills all the bugs, and the taste is unchanged."

When he was considering the best bottles to put his milk into, Andrew knew he could only

go for a glass recyclable option, based on his own values and those held by his customers who were choosing his product not only on taste, but also on the transparency of its supply, and the low impact approach he takes to dairy farming. "So that proved to not be up for debate, if I had gone for plastic, my customers would have had me hung!"

Plastic milk bottles are one of the biggest generators of plastic waste in New Zealand, now China is no longer accepting plastic from the rest of the world.

Various locations around New Zealand have thousands of tonnes of plastic waste awaiting new recycling options, growing by the day as processors and councils struggle to find alternatives that are almost non-existent due to the low values placed on used plastic product sources.

"I do wonder if the Chinese may have done us a favour, by forcing us to have to think harder about what we are going to do about our own plastic waste."

With glass the only option from the start, Andrew had been initially reasonably relaxed about sourcing the distinctive 1litre bottles.

"They seemed reasonably easy to source and import into New Zealand, but the moment I started production I was blasé about how sales were going to go, and ended up pretty short and almost running out of bottles."

The supply he had secured that seemed sufficient was cleaned out within only two weeks of kicking off.

"It then turned out to be nine months before I got my own supplier sorted out in China, we had completely run out of glass bottles in New Zealand."

He had worked on a ratio of 1 bottle on the shelf with 3 in circulation, when in reality what he needed was 7–8 in circulation.

Now with tens of thousands of bottles in reserve Andrew believes he has got the balance

about right, but keeps one wary eye on the stock in his shed.

Having glass of course also involves having a facility to wash and sterilise the bottles, and the process initially involves hand washing every bottle, then running them through a machine that inverts them and flushes an alkaline rinse through them, followed by an acid wash and then a rinse, very similar to what is used to wash down a milking plant. They then pass through a dishwasher like sterilising machine.

But it is the daily distribution of the fresh milk that consumes the highest proportion of cost, and time.

"We are located a good hour south of Dunedin, so travel is a big one for us. However we have managed to build up a very good network of stores throughout Dunedin who have supported us, and helped us build up a very loyal group of customers who really appreciate getting a regular supply, despite our distance from them."

Outlets in Dunedin and its hinterland including Mosgiel and Milton include butcheries, dairies, supermarkets, cafes and bakeries.

The lure of Queenstown as a possible outlet is also strong, but distances are even greater.

"But we have recently got access into that area through a purchaser who also has a store in Cromwell, and we have just started with Fresh Choice supermarkets in Cromwell too."

The popularity is coming not only from locals who enjoy full cream milk on cereal or in their tea.

"We have four cafes who use it in their coffees, and the feedback is that it is far superior for getting that silky, creamy finish in the steamed milk—they tell me it's very hard to get the same consistency with conventional milk."

Andrew is poised to provide milk to his nephew Craig Jenkins who started a home delivery service in Dunedin late April.

Andrew laughs at what is a return to a delivery system very familiar to most urban



New Zealanders older than 35, with the empties left at the door, replaced in the early hours by a fresh filled order.

“And I would not be surprised if this was to become the bigger part of our business. But between this, and with business now right through Otago, my biggest concern is that it does not all get to be too much!”

The farm is limited to about 65 cows on country Andrew describes as “good but not as good as Stirling down the road”, with a tendency to dry off, something that has been an issue this year with Otago poised on “drought” status. “Even with 65 cows, that is a lot of milk to distribute, plenty to keep us busy all year around.”

Milking is through a 14 aside herringbone dairy shed once a day. He is frequently complimented for the condition his cows are in.

“They are really a conventional Kiwi cross herd that are well fed on a diet that consists of grass, balage and grain, but not a lot of grain. They will also have molasses added in and they do get some fodder beet too, along with the occasional feed of potatoes from the grower down the road.”

His philosophy is simply to allow his herd to lead a good life.

“And they repay us by just giving plenty of milk. Last year they produced the equivalent of 500kg of milksolids a head, on a pretty straightforward sort of system that is quite low intensity.”

There are now a number of “cow to customer” farmers around the country that market pasteurised milk, including the “Holy Cow” brand in Dunedin and the Oaklands operation that recently featured on Country Calendar.

Andrew has enjoyed the knowledge of existing suppliers when he started up, and has also enjoyed paying that back with advice to other farmers looking to do something similar.

He is resisting the temptation to expand his product line beyond the simple full cream bottled milk, to products like cheese or yoghurt.

“To do them properly, those products involve a lot of time and energy, and to be honest, it’s another whole area we simply don’t have time to work on—we want to just focus on doing what we do as well as possible.”

His feeling is that the “farm fresh” milk market is growing every week, and he has only had to use Facebook to promote Windy Ridge, and the occasional profile in local media outlets has also helped.

Having started the business with his nephew Craig Jenkins, Andrew now employs Seth, and three other staff including his sister Laryanne in a business firmly nailed to a herd that don’t stop for holidays or Sundays, keeping the pressure on him to oversee milking, collection, pasteurising and bottling.

ABOVE: Located a good hour south of Dunedin, travel is a big one for the daily distribution of fresh milk

ABOVE LEFT: Milking is through a 14 aside herringbone dairy shed once a day. Andrew is frequently complimented for the condition his cows are in

BELOW: Pasteurising the milk elevates the temperature to 65.6C for 10 minutes, usually through plated heat exchangers in order to destroy disease causing bacteria, including tuberculosis, salmonella, listeria and campylobacter common in livestock products

And that is all in addition the usual demands that go with dairying anywhere, including milking, feeding out and stock management.

“To be honest I don’t think I would have even worked as hard as this even when we had 650 cows, it’s a pretty non-stop sort of business but it’s been very rewarding to see where we have got it to now.”



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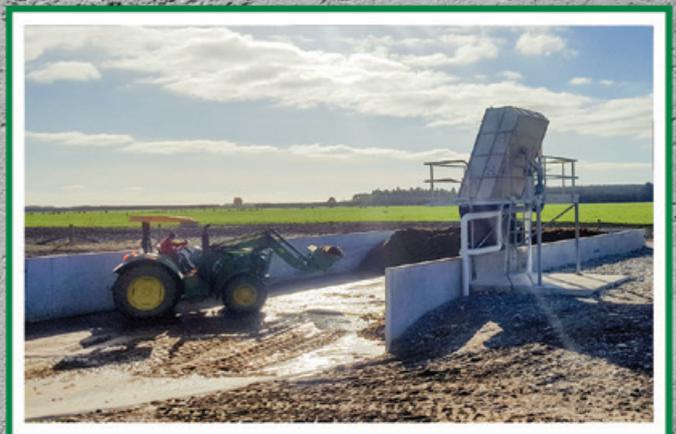
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# Calving Survival 101

**Calving is one of the busiest times of the year on farm and while it's exciting to see the future of the herd, fatigue can quickly set in. Taking care of yourself and the team during this busy period is essential and so this month we're going to talk through a few things that you can do to help achieve this with your team.**

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS

Plan of attack! Prior to the busy time kicking in, sit down with the whole team and talk through what the plan is. Ensure everyone is clear on what is required of the team, who does what and what standards are expected. If you have new team members on board, have an orientation of the farm and what you want calving to look like. Habits and practices can change from farm to farm so be mindful to coach new staff. Also, have the casual staff ready to go so that when it's time to bring on an extra pair of hands they're ready and waiting (don't forget the employment agreement!).

Regular catch ups throughout the busy time. We know it can be hard to meet with the whole team over the busy period so catch up with people every few days—over a coffee or breakfast. Keep the communication

lines open for people to bring up anything and everything with you. Educate your team on what signs to look out for in each other that might show someone is feeling particularly stressed or under pressure and what to do when you are concerned.

Do a thorough maintenance check, order spare parts to have on hand and charge everything up. Breakdowns can cause frustrations to boil over when parts aren't where they need to be quickly. Make sure you have the right gear in the right place and that it's all been checked that it's ready to go.

Regular breaks—no one is productive, or safe, when they haven't had a decent rest. Cap you and your staff's number of hours per day (12 is a good number!). Make a goal to roster staff (farmer included) two days off in a row once a fortnight to encourage them to spend time with family or get off farm. Fatigue slows our reflexes and affects our ability to concentrate—meaning we make more mistakes and don't always make good decisions. Encourage your staff to stretch before and after work as this can be key to keep the body working well for the prolonged physical effort it needs throughout calving.

Champion good eating. While providing full meals isn't always practical, having healthy snacks and water available in dairy shed are good alternatives. Everyone needs to be eating three nutritious meals a day. Ask the team how they're going to make sure they

IMAGE: Calving is important, but so is your team's mental and physical health

eat well. Why not hold a team cooking day where everyone cooks some meals and they get shared around to fill the freezer? Get everyone a slow cooker? Or host evening meals at your house? Encourage people to stay hydrated—and not with coffee or energy drinks. Water is still the best option to keep everyone hydrated.

Say thanks—even after a rubbish full on day, your staff were still there with you every step of the way. Appreciate that. Shout some food a couple of times throughout calving and have a few laughs when things go well. Celebrate the milestones, especially half way! Remember that we all make mistakes, react with coaching and training and move on. Know that the team watch you, so encourage good habits. Make sure they see you rest and eat well. Keep calm after a long day. Things aren't always going to go the way you want but it is what it is, and it will work out.

Calving is important, but so too is your team's mental and physical health. Make that a priority in your planning and you're headed for the best calving you can have.

We're hosting Calving Survival 101 Workshops throughout Mid-Canterbury this June/July for the whole farm team to attend. To register or see if there is a one being held in your area, contact 0800 BIZSAFE or email [info@cp.org.nz](mailto:info@cp.org.nz).

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# Horticulture's expectations high for 2019 Budget

**This is the Government's year of delivery. A key deliverable is the 2019 Budget, on 30 May. This will take a significant step away from a budget that deals with income and expenditure solely, and will be New Zealand's first well-being budget. It will cover four capitals: natural capital; social capital; financial capital; and human capital.**

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

Horticulture New Zealand's vision is healthy food for all forever. This vision links in with the well-being budget and the four capitals. It enables a conversation about some of the important issues facing horticulture that are vital ingredients for sustainable growing, including:

- The Resource Management Act that enables fruit and vegetable growing;
- Recognition that growing enough healthy food to feed New Zealand is vital for New Zealand's long-term sustainability;
- Developing a food supply/security policy for New Zealand; and
- Recognising that water storage is essential (as outlined in the President's column).

Natural capital needs to recognise our unique climate and soils, the storage and use of water, and water quality. It includes the protection of high-value growing land from urban encroachment and the recognition that healthy food needs to have a tailor-made regime under the Resource Management Act to enable sustainable production. The Minister and Ministry for the Environment are working with HortNZ on these provisions, but budget recognition would take these programmes a step forward—hopefully towards a food supply/security policy for New Zealand.

In rural New Zealand, horticulture makes a significant contribution to social capital. A large number of people are employed in horticulture, more than in the dairy industry. As horticulture is co-located with towns and cities, it promotes vibrant communities and businesses. Our industry is an integral part of these communities and contributes to social stability with employment.

For human capital, horticulture's most significant contribution is healthy food that promotes better human health, and with a healthy lifestyle, less reliance on the health system. Consumers are increasingly moving to diets with a high plant base. As more people eat more vegetables as part of their daily food intake, horticulture becomes a much more significant force for human capital. Going forward, the skilled jobs in horticulture and our employment of New Zealanders will contribute directly to

IMAGE: The expectation is that Budget 2019 will promote our vision, healthy food for all forever

New Zealand's human capital.

The expectation is that Budget 2019 will promote our vision, healthy food for all forever. But competition for land and resources is high. With the effects of climate change, looking at what we could and should grow in the future is a vital ingredient for our food production sustainability and something we hope the budget will address. It is no long enough to put faith in competition to determine that the most sustainable crop is grown in the most productive place.

The well-being budget can be used to effectively address these issues and focus on how to achieve healthy food production, sustainably, into the future. Of necessity, this will involve creating a food supply or security framework to identify what is the best food production use for our land, and to preserve that land for those crop. But more than that, other essential ingredients for food production need to be addressed. This is where the focus on natural, social and human capital becomes very important. The first step is to preserve the high quality land, the next step is to ensure water supply and a reliable workforce.

It is our hope that this year's well-being budget holds much promise for horticulture's sustainable future and for healthy food for all forever.

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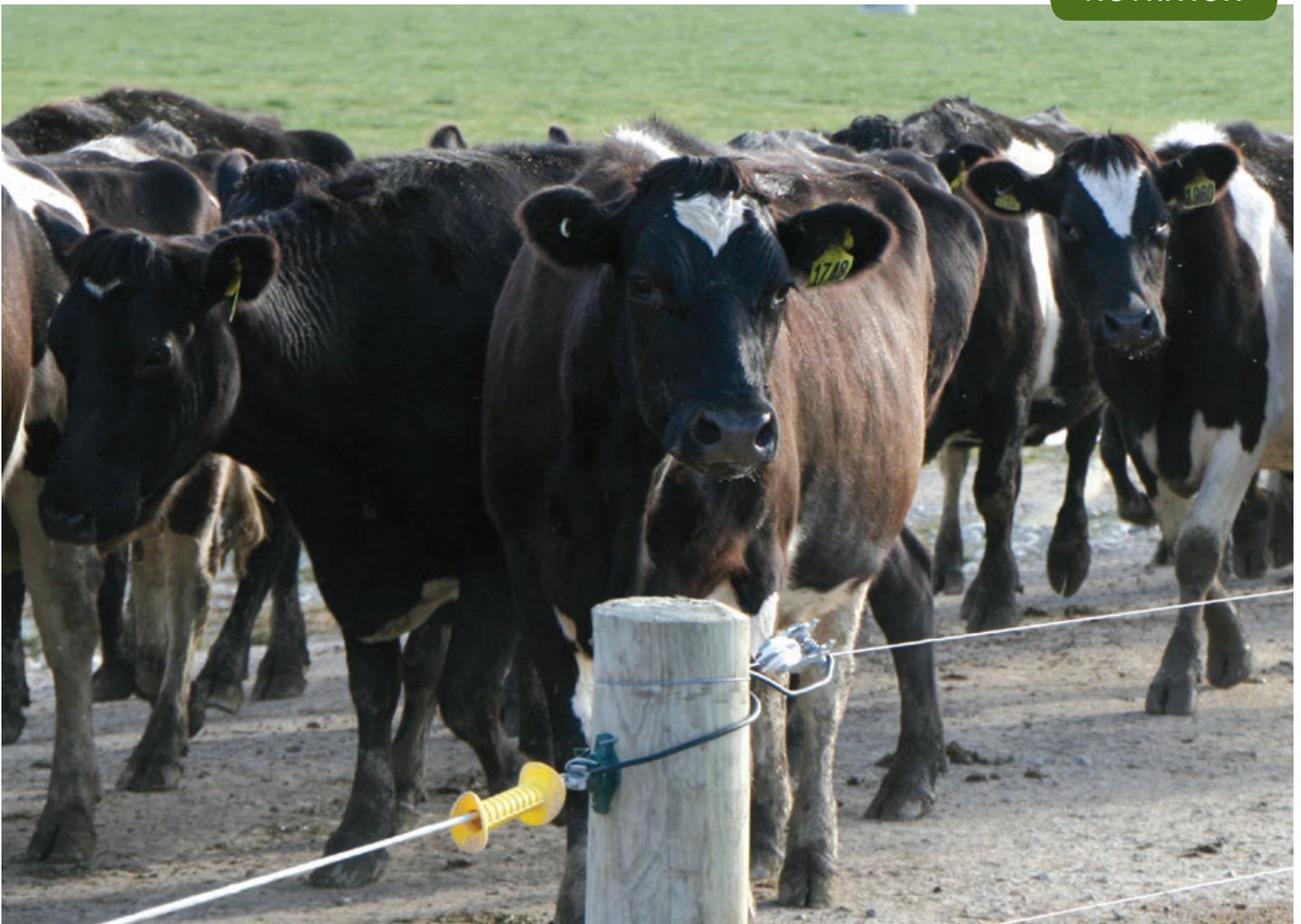


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# Winter Ready

**Are you ready for wintering? Winter is often the time of year we take a much needed breather and refresh ourselves for the next season. However, we need to ensure that our livestock are still performing through this period. This article outlines a few points to consider in order to help you get ready for winter.**

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY LARISSA KINGSBURY, RUMINATE

It is important to have the correct and adequate mineral and vitamin supplementation to guarantee the cows long term success as a productive animal. A common misconception particularly in dairy cattle is that dry animals (not milking) do not require supplementation of vitamins and minerals during winter as they are unproductive. On the contrary, this is the time where not only are they feeding themselves, and a pregnancy, but is the period where the egg quality is set up for the following mating.

Many of our winter diets are lacking in macro nutrients such as magnesium, calcium and phosphorus. Phosphorus in particular is short whilst grazing fodder beet. Because of this, it may be worthwhile to consider supplying stock with mineral supplementation which will aid in their performance during winter, but also set them up well for the coming season.

Regardless of season, stock need clean fresh water at all times. During winter, the weather often means that there is a fair bit of mud around, which can make it difficult for them to walk or get to the trough. Particularly on crop, a good way of getting around this is having a portable water trough at the feed face if possible, as this reduces walking and minimises them making more mud walking to the trough.

It is important to ensure that our animals are getting enough dry matter and energy to meet their dietary requirements. Getting our crops tested to determine the dry matter is imperative. Our success at wintering animals on crop is largely determined by how much they actually end up eating, not assuming what is there. Determining the dry matter will help prevent under allocation.

Inspecting grazing at graziers or the runoff

block, to ensure there is enough feed for the winter prior to animals arriving is vital to ensure the success of the winter period. Likewise, it is also important to regularly check your animals during winter if they are being grazed elsewhere.

Provision needs to be made for wet and cold weather, where utilisation is lower and requirement higher. With tightening of environmental rules and regulation a Plan B needs to be put in place to minimise pasture and paddock damage. This will help minimise potentially damaging runoff into waterways. A Plan B could be suitable standoff area where supplement can be fed, or a sheltered paddock, gully or hill they can safely be moved to get out of the weather.

Monitoring animals body condition during the winter is extremely critical, as you are setting them up for the rest of the season. Dropping light stock out and priority feeding, may need to occur if animals aren't meeting targets or were light at dry off. Continual monitoring of body condition should be done throughout the winter to ensure stock's dietary requirements are being met.

Talk to your local Ruralco representative on how to make wintering easy!

# Venison finds niche in Chinese megacity

The Chinese have long been familiar with deer velvet and its role in traditional Chinese medicine, with 2,000 year old silk scrolls revealing the value ancients placed on its medicinal health giving properties. But despite the healthy, low fat high protein value in venison meat, deer has been far from the menu for most Chinese people, unusually so in a country known for finding a culinary use for most living things. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE





New Zealander and Shanghai resident Hunter McGregor is doing much to almost singlehandedly put venison on more Chinese menus and plates, having spent the past four years carving out a niche for the Canterbury grown meat, and 11 years living there.

Hunter's company Rata Trading sells Mountain River Venison and Hunter has spent much of the past few years on the streets of Shanghai taking his quality product door to door among the city's many restaurants and hotel outlets.

He is the first to admit it has not been an easy sell, with an annual sales volume that probably equates to a week's worth of sheep meat sales from New Zealand to the city, but it is a long haul that is starting to pay dividends.

"Venison has traditionally had little familiarity with locals as a protein source, and as a product requires quite different cooking methods to your usual red meats," he says. But while initially a curiosity on the streets of Shanghai with his wheeled chilly bin full of quality venison, he is gradually winning over chefs with his product.

"It has helped that we have been able to pick up on what chefs are looking for, to take their

suggestions on board and have Mountain River be able to come up with a new portion size, cut or packaging."

He believes his simple, low key business model has helped in getting such a new product through the door, and onto the menu in what can be a very traditional culinary market.

His importing company has deliberately been kept a small operation, comprising him and his Chinese wife as partners, also employing two delivery workers. As such it provides a good model example for any Kiwi company dipping its toe into a market with a relatively new, unfamiliar product.

He has avoided spending thousands of yuan on set piece advertising campaigns, instead taking a more tactical and flexible approach to marketing in Shanghai. This is enabled using social media platforms, namely WeChat to keep in touch with his market for minimal cost, and to deliver rapid feedback for orders and for selling success.

It is a huge market Hunter has set foot into. The Chinese food service sector totalled half a trillion US dollars in 2016, and has typically experienced double digit growth since 2012.

ABOVE: Graham Brown and Hunter McGregor demonstrating with Mountain River Venison to some Chinese chefs

BELOW: Graham Brown preparing a Mountain River Venison dish

BELOW LEFT: Mountain River Processing Plant, located on Northbank Station

Despite the efforts of large international chains to establish themselves in Tier 1 and 2 cities like Shanghai, traditional local city restaurants remain hugely popular. However, an increasingly wealthy and well-travelled middle class are fast emerging and over 400,000 a year are now visiting New Zealand.

"They increasingly want to know where their product came from, and are prepared to pay a premium to a point for something that is also seen as healthy and sustainably produced.

"The advantage for NZ is that our farming practices are transparent, maybe not perfect, but we are heading in the right direction and the story for deer farming is even better."

Given the high end appeal of a protein like venison, Shanghai is an ideal city to try and penetrate, with its above average level of income, and growing wealthy class. Hunter is careful to match supply to demand at a



premium, rather than discount to simply sell greater volume.

"There has to be a premium there without pricing yourself off the market."

The second challenge is ensuring chefs can cook venison properly. Given its low fat content it demands a quick, hot cooking period. Working with renowned NZ chef and venison ambassador Graham Brown, Hunter has been able to communicate venison's unique cooking and eating properties to chefs around Shanghai at cooking sessions and workshops.

He acknowledges the success has also been built on the consistency of quality provided by Mountain River, and the company's flexibility around supplying required cuts.

Braised dishes including shanks prove more popular in winter, while raw dishes like carpaccio and tartare work over summer. "And ribs work well all year round."

Hunter is confident he is running slightly ahead of the market as Chinese appetites become more international. This is aided by greater travel, but also a more experimental millennial generation happy to dine out regularly, and responsible for 45% of the food service industry's consumption.

Mountain River Venison's Marketing Manager, John Sadler, says the company's strategy in China has a long-time horizon on it, something they are quite prepared to accept.

"The Chinese impression of venison as a meat is not that widespread, or always that positive. There are only isolated pockets of deer farming in China, so it is not a big industry there, and more velvet than venison focussed."

He maintains targeting largely the Western food service sector will help Mountain River be ahead of the curve as Chinese diners explore more western type dishes, and urban wealth levels increase.

"The most important element of our strategy is if we can establish a distribution channel that is New Zealand led, we can position our product well for long-term market growth."

He expects that in 10 years China will be a substantial venison market, and Mountain River will be well set to capitalise on that.

"Distribution is a big issue in China. There is a real risk our product gets 'lost' among so many others, and we need to work hard to get our story to the end user. Hunter is doing that well with his very personable one on one relationships. For us the challenge has been finding a market small enough in China that we can cope with as a niche product."

New Zealand's total venison production of only 15,000t a year is simply too small to be attempting to compete against other high volume red meat suppliers.

"Our target market is chefs, and as a group they appreciate the very hands on approach we take to them. Technology and smartphones have also meant small companies like Hunters can keep in touch very cost effectively with their market."



## Mt Hutt Station a player in niche venison market

The 2,800ha Mt Hutt Station soars from its extensive flat country to the boundary of the Mt Hutt skifield, providing a varying and challenging property on which Bruce and Becky Hood run 2,000 velveting stags and 2,000 breeding hinds.

For the Hoods the operation is very much a family affair, with Bruce still getting regular help from his father Keith whose early work in establishing good bloodlines has done much to account for the high genetic value and productivity of today's Mt Hutt deer operation. Initially Mt Hutt built its reputation on velvet production, but over the years venison has come to greater prominence.

Stag numbers have been dropped in recent years from 3,000 to 2,000, with sales also providing an income stream. Thanks to having been run in larger mobs the stags are familiar with larger groups when they are sold.

Over the past few years Bruce says they have bought some more English genetics back into the herd in an effort to help harden the offspring for the varied weather and grazing conditions the stock are exposed to.

ABOVE: Dennise & Keith Hood with their son Bruce from Mt Hutt Station

Bruce visited Hungary to source some new Eastern genetics three years ago to establish and integrate a new eastern bloodline into the herd.

He notes that only time will tell whether it was a costly trip or a successful one. "We are continuing to keep a small nucleus of Eastern. If we are looking for any new genetics we have been sourcing that from the likes of David Stevens or Netherdale, they provide us with the velvet genetics."

With good genetics established they have increasingly opted for top tier stags in recent years, with Bruce feeling confident about the maternal genetics underlying the herd today. The entire hind herd is marked with EID tags today, invaluable for identifying what animals are in what mob. DNA sampling is also used to match hinds with female offspring, along with 10-12 of the top stags each season.

The station has been relatively quick to adopt such new technology, and has helped keep Bruce's "smarter not bigger" philosophy.

As the deer industry has sought to boost per animal productivity, Bruce can proudly point to how Mt Hutt has "walked the walk", with the station producing a similar amount of velvet from almost half the stags it had in the early eighties.



ABOVE: Adam Waite, Farm Manager at Northbank Station

ABOVE LEFT: Yearlings at Northbank Station

The station experiences a slow emergence from the usual 120 day winter, but enjoys relatively safe summer grazing ensuring good weaning weights from offspring.

Often early spring grass growth will be accompanied by snow falls, just as feed demand starts to peak from hinds, velvetting stags and weaners all at once. Supplements will include grass silage and the occasional ration of barley or maize.

Getting weight on early can be a challenge in these conditions, but recent years of steady \$9–\$10/kg venison schedule has helped, and supply continues to remain running behind global demand helping keep some tension in returns, and reasonable upside in return prospects.

Meantime the equally tumultuous velvet market appears to have levelled off in recent years, with some welcome stability coming into the market. “The grey market for velvet into China appears to be less, with the Chinese keeping the Koreans honest, I guess the big worry would be if we get too many people supplying into the market, we need to keep the market growing for the volume we are producing.”

As a regular supplier of venison to Mountain River at Rakaia, Bruce is interested in the efforts to market venison in China, a market he knows is well familiar with deer velvet, but less so with deer meat. “The visitors we have had come here will talk about having stags that live for maybe 20 years that they get velvet from, and only then they will eat them at the end of their life- needless to say they are not at their best, quite tough.

“I can understand how chefs may know about venison in China, but there would be a mindset there that venison is pretty tough, so it would be a hard but not impossible job selling venison in China, I would imagine.”

## Northbank Station stays close to market.

Not so far from Mt Hutt Station, Northbank Station enjoys a closer tie to Mountain River Venison than most properties, with Mountain River owner Mary Hood also owning Northbank.

Northbank manager Adam Waite has spent the past four years since he started on the 680ha property working hard to lift average carcass weights to his targeted 60kg, coming from an average of only 52kg when he arrived.

“This season we are on target to achieve 58kg, and we feel pretty confident that with our continuing focus on management and grass species we can achieve that,” says Adam.

Benefitting from its flat contour the property is 100% irrigated out of the Rakaia and is in the process of having its flood irrigation that still covers half its area, converted over to centre pivot systems.

Because deer fences sit higher than cattle fences the system will comprise 16 centre pivots by the time it is completed, but they promise to deliver more timely and efficient application to help optimise the significant investment the station’s owners have made in re-grassing the entire operation into improved, high performing grass varieties.

The station includes some innovative approaches to dealing with the centre pivots, including sprung double gates to enable the pivots to pass from paddock to paddock without the deer escaping. To provide a buffer for restricted irrigation flows the property has also recently completed a 9ha irrigation storage pond.

The renewed pastures include lucerne stands/red clover stands, a Shogun red clover mix, and a mix that includes fescue and red clover on the property’s harder country. The red clover component delivers good weight gains, with rates of up to 700g a day at peak growing season.

Finishing 6,000 head under such an intensive, irrigated system makes Northbank Station relatively unique in the industry, and the operation is a particular rarity in the flat country of Canterbury surrounded by dairy farms. While the station also has 300 head of cattle, deer are the main focus, and meat production eclipses velvet which is harvested prior to stags going to the works.

The extensive irrigation system ensures a good feed bank from autumn heading into winter from when the weaners arrive from

March-May. The majority of feed over winter comes from green feed crops including fodder beet and kale.

Adam says the stock’s genetics are spread from heavier Wapiti-Elk hybrids to lighter Reds, enabling processing to be spread from mid-August right through to later autumn, with the bigger Wapiti-Elks going first.

“The pasture renewal is not a cheap exercise and we are really monitoring our gains to see what is delivering the best returns. I work closely with an agronomist, and we are working to keep tuning up our grass species over time.”

For Adam, working with an animal he describes as “majestic and intelligent, and great to eat”, is a privilege and a passion he picked up from his father.

He also enjoys the link through to the market he gets with the association with Mountain River Venison, and the tough job that has been done to try and take much of the seasonality out of supply.

“If we can keep supplying these markets like China and the United States all year round, and not just chase the chilled market, I am quite confident about where venison is heading.”

Adam and Sharon have also just learnt they are the recipients of two prestigious awards in this year’s Deer Industry Awards. These were the NZ Deer Farmers Association Next Generation Award, given to up and coming young deer farmers in the industry for outstanding performance across environmental, financial and social aspects of the business. The second award was the Firstlight Foods Award, recognising total commitment to farming sustainably with a strong customer focus.



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# A winning formula for your pasture and animal health

Victory Lime is based in Mt Somers and is Canterbury's largest agricultural lime supplier.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY VICTORY LIME



LEFT: Victory Lime always maintains the highest level of machinery and equipment and prides itself on always having product available for customers.

the soil can maintain its optimal PH level, provided of course the lime is of high quality such as Victory Lime.

In terms of animal health and nutrition Victory Lime is Canterbury's largest supplier of lime flour and is used as an ingredient by a wide variety of animal feed and nutrition suppliers. Victory Lime and AB Lime in Winton also exclusively co-produce the "Healthy Cow" range of nutritional products which aim to target magnesium and calcium deficiency disorders and improve herd health and performance.

The business always maintains the highest level of machinery and equipment and prides itself on always having product available for customers. "We're very proud of the fact that our shed always has product on hand and the quarry has the highest level of manufacturing equipment to ensure everything functions smoothly on-site" says Jenna.

There is a team of 12 staff at the plant, many of whom are highly experienced and also part of the Mt Somers, Methven and Ashburton local communities.

As well as employing many local families, Victory also likes to play its part in the district and support local causes. The business supports the local Play Centre and Mt Somers School, as well as the annual Mayfield A&P Show and the local Mt Somers Rugby Club.

As winter approaches, the plant is busy producing extra aggregate supplies as winter is the time when many dairy tracks and laneways are being repaired and upgraded.

"We're busy stocking up on product so we'll be ready to supply our customers with what they need to get the job done, that's something we always strive to do here at Victory."

A discount on agricultural lime is available for Ruralco cardholders.

The quarry has been operating for over 60 years and Victory Lime, as part of the Palmer Resources group has been managing the site since 2000 supplying a wide range of lime products. "We've a very experienced team out here looking after our rural customers and have been in the quarrying business for over 80 years," explains Office Manager, Jenna McLellan.

The business supplies a wide range of both agricultural lime and aggregate lime products. Their Mt Somers Rock and Lime Rock products are ideal for both construction and upgrades of dairy tracks and laneways and come in a variety of sizes to suit the specific application. They also offer various landscaping aggregate products including lime chip as well as larger boulders and slabs and landscaping products.

The team at Victory can provide quotes and arrange viewings of any of their finished products or put customers in touch with contractors who use their aggregates.

In terms of transport options, the business works with a variety of transport contractors to get their product on site in both a cost efficient and reliable manner.

The business is very proud of their top-quality lime, and the lime is tested regularly by accredited laboratories such as Eurofins

to maintain its consistency and best quality guarantee.

High quality lime is assessed on three factors: purity, particle size and moisture content.

"Customers are always welcome to give us a bell, and we'll send them a copy of our latest lab results as we really do stand by our product and its quality," Jenna explains.

Adding lime to pastures is vital to improve the PH quality of the soil, reducing acidity and unlocking and boosting the vital matrix of nutrients which are essential to maximise growth and yield of crops.

"Farmers spend a huge amount of money on putting various nutrients into the soil, but the fact of the matter is without a good PH balance spending lots of money on fertiliser isn't going to have the desired effect unless those nutrients can work to their maximum efficiency at the correct PH level," Jenna explains.

From a long-term perspective fertiliser costs can be reduced once liming has been completed and with annual applications

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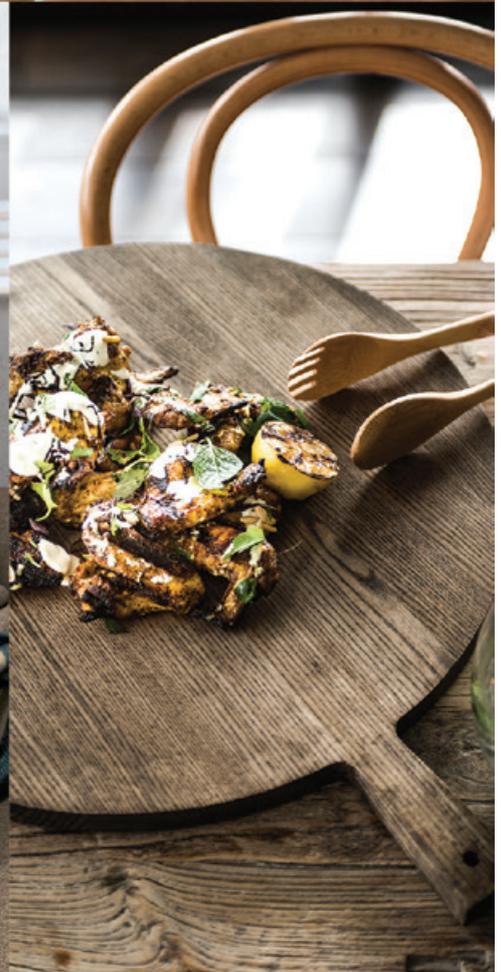
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**GIFT & HOMEWARE**

# Cereal crop management

There is no such thing as an 'average year' for cereal crop management. The weather plays a huge role in how well crops grow and yield, and it also impacts on which weeds, pests and diseases will be most problematic. WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY FAR



If that's not hard enough, even once you have a handle on the key problems, issues such as reduced sensitivity or resistance to agrichemicals start coming to the fore.

FAR's cereal research team put a huge amount of effort into disease prediction and management. They work with experts from around New Zealand, Australia and the UK to make sure we understand which strains of which diseases are present in New Zealand crops, and whether any of them are becoming more difficult to control with various chemical active ingredients or families.

- Sensitivity shifts of Septoria tritici blotch (STB) to SDHI fungicides have been detected in the UK, but none have been detected in New Zealand to date. FAR is readdressing its fungicide strategy to retain use of SDHI chemistry.

#### Ramularia

- Plant & Food Research identified three SdhC mutations that impact the performance of SDHIs against Ramularia in barley.
- Results from 2018 microplate assays found a further shift, with 96% of SdhC isolates collected insensitive to SDHIs.



## RESEARCH LEADING CHANGE

27-28 JUNE 2019, LINCOLN UNIVERSITY



Researcher Jo Drummond presented the latest cereal disease findings and issues at FAR's Autumn Round-Up meetings in April. She touched on New Zealand results while warning growers of some of the issues that are showing up in the Northern Hemisphere and likely to be headed our way. Some of her key messages are summarised below.

#### Septoria tritici blotch (STB)

- Yield response to fungicide under high disease pressure conditions in 2018/19 was greater for more susceptible cultivars than for more resistant cultivars.
- In 2018/19 robust fungicide programmes were required regardless of cultivar, with a three spray programme the most cost effective in both trials.
- Cultivar ratings are an important part of an integrated disease management approach taking into consideration time of sowing, rainfall during October/November, and location.

- The multi-site fungicide Phoenix® has shown control of Ramularia when mixed with Proline.
- Ongoing research is monitoring Ramularia sensitivity to fungicides, identifying effective management programmes and investigating the importance of seed-borne and airborne inoculum, as well as cultivar resistance.

#### Resistant cultivars

**Under high disease pressure, resistant cultivars still require robust fungicide programmes but they do limit potential yield loss.**

Because there is no typical season, several years of data are required to make generalisations about disease management in cereals. Data from the 2015/16, 2016/17 to 2017/18 seasons suggests that under high disease pressure conditions, where high rainfall and relative humidity are prevalent from stem elongation to ear emergence, a robust fungicide programme is required, even for cultivars which are deemed

to have a level of disease resistance. However, the data also suggests that while a robust programme is required, more resistant cultivars may still offer greater flexibility if fungicide timings are not optimal due to the lack of spray windows, as the potential for yield loss is lower for more resistant cultivars.

#### BYDV Update: Extension to SFF project to repeat field scale trials

Two years of BYDV shade house trials found wheat plants suffered a yield loss through to the end of stem extension (GS39). Trials were moved to the field in 2018 to investigate the impact of BYDV on yield through use of seed treatments, foliar insecticides to the start (GS31) and finish (GS39) of stem extension and integrated pest management (IPM). A one year extension to the project has been approved to repeat field trials in 2019.

#### UK cereal disease expert at FAR Conference in June

Recognising the importance of cereal disease management, FAR has invited a UK expert on the subject to speak at their conference in June. Fiona Burnett is Professor of Applied Plant Pathology and Head of Knowledge and Innovation at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), where activities cover all aspects of rural education, skills training, consultancy and research.

Fungicide resistance and efficacy are core activities for her research team there.

She chairs the Fungicide Resistance Action Group-UK, a group made up of independent researchers, agrochemical and industry representative, regulators and agronomists where emerging resistance issues are discussed and advice and recommendations issued.

Fiona is a key translational crop scientist in the UK and a high profile independent influencer of crop protection practices.

Analysis of crop protection decision-making problems is at the centre of her research interests with a particular focus on Integrated Pest Management and pesticide stewardship.

She is Agriculture Sector Lead in the directorate for Scotland's Plant Health Centre of Expertise, set up by the Scottish Government in 2018.

The steering groups and committees she contributes to are extensive and include the UK Plant Health Forum (Defra) and the British Crop Protection Council's Diseases Working Group. She chairs the Association for Crop Protection in Northern Britain and she is a Director of Scottish Quality Farm Assured Cereals Ltd, a Director of the Genomia Fund and is Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee for Scottish Quality Crops Ltd. She is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology.

ABOVE: Sensitivity shifts of Septoria tritici blotch (STB) to SDHI fungicides have been detected in the UK, but none have been detected in New Zealand to date  
MAIN IMAGE: Ongoing research is monitoring Ramularia sensitivity to fungicides

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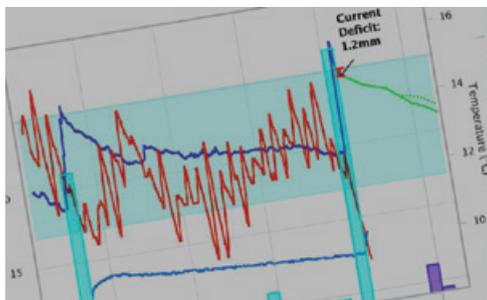
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# Built on a very solid foundation

It's fair to say Tony and Lynn Worsfold are experts in their field. The husband and wife team have been in the concrete industry for over thirty-five years.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY PAVECO



The couple founded successful concrete business Concrete Plus in Christchurch and ran it for many years before relocating back to their hometown of Ashburton in 2003 and founding Paveco Ashburton.

Since then Tony, Lynn and their team have been offering a range of concrete services to happy customers in both the rural and residential sectors. "We cover everything from residential driveways, paths and patios to rural concrete work such as dairy or sheep yards, wintering barns and silage bunkers."

Basically, wherever there are large quantities of concrete to pour, we'll do it" confirms Tony. Paveco has a wide coverage area and according to Tony they are happy to work on jobs through Mid and South Canterbury and if the job is out of their coverage Tony can refer customers to more local based contractors who can help.

Paveco has a staff of fifteen, all local and experienced and overseen by Tony's right hand man—General Manager Martyn Wheeler. The company also runs its own apprenticeship scheme and each year a suitable candidate completes their full concrete placing apprenticeship through Paveco. Having devoted himself to the concrete business for so many years, Tony still likes going out on jobs and is on-site visiting projects on a daily basis. He is also available for clients to discuss options when planning a project, either rural or residential. "I'm always around to guide customers through the process and discuss any concerns on a project."

As winter approaches and with fewer residential projects in progress, Tony explains that Paveco likes to focus on its rural customers.

"Wintering barns are a popular option to complete at this time of year. Farmers are seeing the benefits of barns we've completed during prior winter seasons so that always gets other rural customers interested. Even the larger barns we can complete

over a few weeks and it really is a great investment. Now is also a good time to clean up the yard and extend raceways or just extend the yard or feed pad. Repair and remedial work are also important at this time of year. Especially if an audit has highlighted cracks in the dairy yard—Paveco can repair damage quickly, grinding out cracks and replace with a flexible joint sealant to reduce cracking."

The concrete industry is always changing and Tony and the Paveco team pride themselves on being leaders in embracing new trends, products and techniques. While the rural side of the business tends to be straightforward, following farmers specifications on concrete thickness and size, the residential side of the business sees many changes in trends and customer preferences.

The Paveco website has a comprehensive list on various finishes and colours available for patios and driveways. Coloured concrete patios have become popular, a coloured finish is added and then the concrete is decoratively cut into slabs to create a flagstone effect. "The overall effect looks great and as a bonus the more cuts in the concrete means it's less likely to crack and we obviously put plenty of expansion joints in as we're cutting it," explains Tony.

Exposed aggregate driveways are also making a comeback and according to Tony the new product has a much finer finish and is less coarse than the older style exposed aggregate driveways. The use of fibre mesh is also a gamechanger in the industry. Steel mesh is still used for traditional structural work but for less complex jobs fibre mesh is used for

reinforcement and is added directly to the concrete mix, it means the concrete truck can get right into the job and saves a huge amount of time making it more economical for the customer. Regardless whether it's a rural or residential job Paveco prides itself on its excellent health and safety record. The company has just signed up with health and safety expert Employsure. "We've had a H&S system in place from the outset but we are upgrading in order to be fully compliant with the latest laws and requirements so I'd like to think Paveco is at the very forefront of health and safety practices and our clients can be confident we have the very best systems in place while working on their projects."

The Paveco office on Robinson Street also stocks a wide range of concrete maintenance and repair products. Tony advises that driveways should be water blasted and sealed every five years to keep them in good condition. Paveco offers a wide range of sealant products as well as a selection of tinted sealants for older style driveways. They also supply crack repair products for any urgent repair needs. "I drive around every day and I see plenty of driveways that could do with a little bit of attention to bring them back to life again, we're always here to offer advice and guidance on the best concrete solution." Ruralco Cardholders will receive a 20% discount on concrete pavers and a 10% discount on concrete tools, repair products and accessories.

ABOVE: We cover everything from residential driveways, paths and patios to rural concrete work such as dairy or sheep yards, wintering barns and silage bunkers

BELOW: The concrete industry is always changing, Tony and the Paveco team pride themselves on being leaders in embracing new trends, products and techniques



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# Attention to feed management now will pay dividends in spring

Attention to feed management now will pay dividends in spring when high-quality feed is required to realise the potential of next season's lamb crop.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BEEF AND LAMB NEW ZEALAND



Farm systems scientist Tom Fraser says dry conditions around many parts of the country make feed budgeting even more critical to ensure multiple-bearing ewes have high-quality feed going into lambing.

"That needs to be a real priority."

Tom says farmers need to plan ahead, as while there is plenty of poorer quality feed around, it is the high-quality feed that will determine the performance of next year's lamb crop.

He says many parts of the country have been experiencing a green drought and even if it does rain, it is too late to get significant pasture growth out of any moisture.

Tom says it shouldn't be too difficult to maintain ewes as winter feed crops are not looking too bad and most farmers have plenty of supplement on-hand.

Body-condition scoring to prioritise light ewes will be a key management tool particularly if feed is short.

"There is plenty of maintenance feed around, it's just the high-quality feed that could be a problem in spring.

"Really farmers have to deal with the feed resources they have on-hand and do a budget to ensure the farm is set-up to try and maximise production next spring," he says.

Amongst the tools Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) has available to help farmers with their feed management decisions is the FeedSmart app.

ABOVE: From four to six weeks out from lambing, triplet-bearing ewes should be fed to maximise their intake and require high-quality ryegrass-based pastures

Free to download, this app can be used on smart phones, tablets or computers and takes into account a number of variables to give farmers instant information about the nutritional requirements of different classes of livestock, feed values and feed allocation.

Developed by B+LNZ in conjunction with the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP), the app will help farmers estimate the feed requirements for sheep and cattle at any time of the year and for different levels of production.

B+LNZ Product Development Manager, Aaron Meikle, says the app also has simple tools for day-to-day feed allocation information. This includes how long a paddock of feed will last, the size of the break needed to meet nutritional requirements and stocking rates.

While it is set to standard levels of feed quality, topography, supplement quality and animal size, farmers can customise the settings to suit their operations.

Meikle says the app was developed in response to demand for feed management information from farmers.

"Feed planning information is our most sought-after resource. Back in 2012, B+LNZ started tossing the idea around about an app or software that would make the process of

feed management simple and effective. With the advent of RMPP and with requests from other partners in the programme, the idea was picked up and delivered."

By making the most efficient and effective use of their feed resources, farmers are ensuring their stock's nutritional requirements are being met which will allow them to express their genetic and production potential.

Meikle says FeedSmart can be used in conjunction with other management tools, such as Body Condition Scoring (BCS), to help farmers lift the productivity and profitability of their breeding stock.

Many farmers are finding BCS to be a powerful tool in allowing feed to be partitioned into stock that need it, rather than over-feeding stock that don't.

Body Condition Scoring is particularly useful in drought, winter or anytime feed is limited.

Body Condition Scoring ewes at scanning is particularly useful for partitioning feed resources into the ewes that need it most, this includes multiple-bearing ewes.

From four to six weeks out from lambing, triplet-bearing ewes should be fed to maximise their intake and require high-quality ryegrass-based pastures covers of a minimum of 1200 kg DM/ha—or 4cm in height. This height maximises the ewe's intake at every mouthful. Quality is crucial and the pasture should have an ME of 11 MJ/kg DM- this means plenty of leaf and no dead material.

Rumen size between twin and triplet-bearing ewes does not differ, so triplet ewes do not need to be separated out when feed is plentiful. However, if feed is short, then triplet-bearing ewes should be prioritised for supplementary feeding.

B+LNZ has a number of feed and stock management resources available at [www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com). The organisation also runs feed budgeting and body condition scoring workshops to help farmers make the most effective use of their feed resources.

The FeedSmart app is available free of charge at [www.feedsmart.co.nz](http://www.feedsmart.co.nz) and once downloaded, it works offline anywhere, anytime a device is turned on.

B+LNZ also has a FeedSmart User Guide downloadable from our website, and three instructional videos on our YouTube channel – [www.youtube.com/user/beeflambnz/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/beeflambnz/videos)

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# Salmon farming industry takes a step forward



**The evolution of New-Zealand's salmon farming industry is poised to take a significant step forward with ground breaking research underway at Cawthron's new Finfish Research Centre (FRC).**

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY AQUACULTURE NEW ZEALAND

The state-of-the-art facility has enabled a team of scientists, led by Cawthron's Dr Jane Symonds, to study king salmon like never before as they work to unlock the secrets to faster growth, reducing feed requirements, optimising health, and farming with a lighter environmental footprint.

Dr Symonds said her team was studying everything from genetics, to fish behaviour to help industry farm more efficiently.

"Most of the current research is on Atlantic salmon, which is farmed overseas," she said.

"Here in New Zealand, we have a unique environment and unique stock. The knowledge base on farmed king salmon is limited so we're working with farmers to expand that knowledge base. It's all about working out what makes some salmon more efficient than others.

"We're looking at individual salmon and identifying why they're efficient or inefficient. And there's multiple components to that—health, behaviour, genetics, growth, feed, temperature etc. Ultimately what we're trying to understand is how to grow salmon faster and with less resources."

The \$8 million FRC, which was independently funded by Cawthron, comprises a 1,008 m<sup>2</sup> insulated and biosecure building, overseen by Cawthron's Dr Seumas Walker, with 27 rearing tanks that can be operated with freshwater or

seawater, and sophisticated recirculation systems (built by Fresh By Design), which gives them the ability to control and explore the environmental components that effect growth rates.

The first trials commenced immediately after the centre opened late last year, with 4,000 fish studied under a range of temperatures and feeding regimes, even X-raying individual fish to monitor how much they've eaten.

"What we're looking at is the effect of temperature and feeding regimes on growth and efficiency, and developing more informed bioenergetic models for the species," Dr Symonds said.

"The first phase of the trial ended in December and we saw big differences between the regimes, but also considerable variation among fish in the same tanks."

"The second phase of the study was continued into March where we looked at setting up swim flumes to monitor oxygen consumption and study the fish's metabolism.

"We'll also be looking at carrying out behavioural trials, setting up cameras and observing differences in feeding behaviour between individuals."

The research in the FRC is part of a MBIE Endeavour funded programme, 'Improving Chinook salmon feed efficiency for industry growth' which began in 2016 and has seen participation and support from the main NZ salmon farming companies across a range of initiatives. "We've been able to help some farmers understand the genetic diversity of their broodstock," said Dr Symonds.

"Our work to create a baseline understanding of the species' biology and health will help industry veterinarians monitor and manage fish health.

"We've designed sensor arrays to give farmers real-time data on the environmental conditions in their pens including temperature, turbidity and chlorophyll.



ABOVE: Feeding fish  
MIDDLE: FRC recirc system  
TOP: Finfish Research Centre team

And in the future, we'll be looking at temperature tolerance, and providing information about which fish cope better with higher temperatures, and that can help guide breeding programmes," she said.

"It's a big step forward for an industry that's only been going 40 years. The more knowledge we put together, the more we understand how to farm king salmon and meet some of the challenges the fish face like changing environment, health, and diet, and the more we can help grow the industry."



# The sport of kings

The thundering of hooves ring through the air as the horsemen gallop along the side-lines. The rider in the lead jostles with his opponent as they try to ride the other off the ball, their horses' glossy in the sun, their ears back as they careen across the smooth, emerald grass. The player takes a swing, hitting the ball with a resounding crack. It sails through the goal posts and a white flag goes up. Goal! WORDS BY EMILY HERBERT, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY SOUTH ISLAND POLO ASSOCIATION

Polo, known as the sport of kings, is undoubtedly thrilling to watch. Sylvester Stallone has reputedly likened it to playing golf during an earthquake. A contact sport on horseback at speed, it involves eight players wielding mallets on a field equivalent to five football fields. Each player has an official handicap ranging from -2, to the best in the world ranking at 10. The four players add up to a team handicap, generally playing other teams categorised with a similar ranking. A regular match is around an hour to 90-minutes long, divided into four or six periods of time called 'chukkas'—each chukka lasting seven-minutes. The horses, incredibly fit and bred for their stamina, speed and agility, are changed regularly, either every half or full chukka.

What was once a sport deigned only for the rich and famous, is now played across the world with varying degrees of glamour. And while it's known to draw the who's who à la Pretty Woman, for most clubs it's less Moët

and heels, more meat pies and wellies. For the antipodes, polo is a family sport with a farming backbone; a day of community and fellowship, where generations play alongside each other and everyone gathers after the game for a cuppa or a brew. An abiding love of the sport and the horses runs deeply through the New Zealand scene, and the sport is again on the rise thanks to the passion of its devoted members.

Formed in 1890, The New Zealand Polo Association boasts 438 affiliated players, hailing from 20 Polo Clubs across the country. And the ranks are swelling, with more women than ever donning white breeches and saddling up. "It's a privilege to have Nina Clarkin live here for six months of the year with her husband John Paul Clarkin and two children, playing and promoting polo at their own club, Mystery Creek Polo," New Zealand Polo Association secretary Diane Brown said. "Nina is one of the highest rated female players in the world and is a huge promoter

of women's polo in New Zealand." And the promotion is working, with the South Island this year holding its first Women's Tournament; a milestone for female players and a precedent for future seasons.

It's a time of burgeoning optimism for the sport, which has suffered its fair share of ebbs and flows over the years. This is in part thanks to its growing accessibility, opening its doors to the wider population and hosting events ripe with entertainment for spectators. "The South Island is now on a par with the North Island, with a lot of positive people improving our fields and building new ones," South Island Polo Association President Guy Martin said. "The feeling is buoyant and recent games played in Christchurch's Hagley Park have increased interest and exposure for the sport." There are seven clubs across the south, including a new one just unveiled in Queenstown. "Polo has gravitated towards Christchurch with it being by far the largest club," Guy continued. "The country clubs are



down on numbers but it's very exciting to see a new club emerge in Queenstown." The Queenstown Club has been a long time in the making according to founder Jonathan Gabler. "I'd been coming to Queenstown for many years, enjoying everything the area had to offer but for me personally, the one thing missing that could complete my 'lifestyle' dream was the opportunity to play polo here," Jonathan said. "I also thought it would be a fantastic, positive addition to the sports community and social scene, as well as appealing to tourists who I believe would like to watch a polo match or even try the sport. We're working with fantastic local vineyards, distilleries, food providers and event contractors to ensure spectators are very well looked after while watching matches!" The club held its first polo tournament last

November and has enjoyed enthusiastic support. "Finding polo ponies was one of the greater challenges but we now have 18 horses at the club, so we can mount a full Queenstown Polo team next season," he said. "Winston Churchill said, 'A polo handicap is a passport to the world' and it really is true. Young people make friends for life with people from all over the world by taking up the sport. It's hard to describe how exciting the game is. People say it's the fastest team-sport in the world and it can involve quite a bit of contact between players."

Like any sport, the importance of recruiting the next generation of players is paramount to the game's future. This is seen especially in the South Island, with concerted efforts made to bring on tomorrow's icons in the saddle. "We're on a roll thanks to a lot of forward-thinking people who formed Schools and Universities Polo Association (SUPA) some 12 years ago," Guy Martin said. "We're seeing the flow on affect, with young players and new people coming into the sport. Most of the high schools in Christchurch and North Canterbury have teams playing in the three school tournaments held each season. SUPA also invite an international school team to play and we've had visiting international school teams from Australia, USA and South Africa. They reciprocate and invite our school teams to play in their countries."

SUPA offers students from Year 7 to 12 the chance to learn and play at tournament level - even those with very little riding experience can learn to ride and control a polo pony. Based primarily at Waireka Polo Farm, 30-minutes north of Christchurch, the association makes the sport accessible by providing well-schooled ponies and experienced coaches who take a novice player right through to tournament level; all players need to begin is a good equestrian helmet, riding boots, chaps and a sense of adventure. "Our last tournament in March

was our biggest yet with 25 teams and almost 100 young players over five grades. Teams are based on ability so there are various ages playing together, and they're mixed with equal numbers of boys and girls," said Sharyn Wilding, the association's former treasurer. "Some of these players are also competing in club tournaments and even play on teams with their parents from time to time; quite unique in a sport." The family atmosphere is second to none, with word of mouth spreading about the organisation. "A lot of the families involved in polo have a farming background. Families travel from as far as Southland and Blenheim to the tournaments, so it's always a good catch up. Entry is free and anyone is welcome to come and watch and bring a picnic."

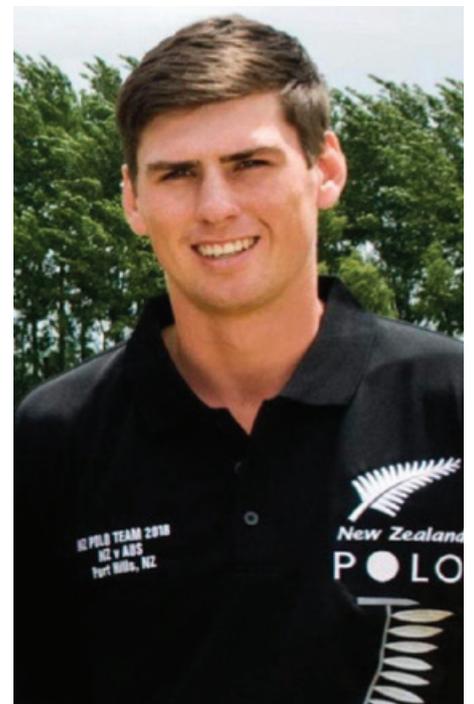
Twenty-one year-old Sam Martin is just one athlete who has benefited from SUPA; already boasting a four-goal handicap, the young player has a glittering career ahead of him. Raised on a farm in Loburn, North Canterbury, he hopes to reach professional status as a polo player while remaining involved on the land. "The farming community is massive for polo, because the majority of people playing in the South Island are farmers, who play for the love of the sport," Sam said. "It has a great community feeling about it because everyone knows everyone, and they all come to have fun and enjoy the sport on the weekends. The membership is really strong at the moment."

ABOVE: Guy Martin, President of the South Island Polo Association

BELOW LEFT: Already boasting a 4-goal handicap, Sam Martin has a glittering career ahead of him

BELOW: Twenty-one year-old Sam Martin is just one athlete who has benefited from SUPA

OPPOSITE: What was once a sport deigned only for the rich and famous, is now played across the world with varying degrees of glamour



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# Agronomy update

It has been a number of years since the autumn period has produced a consistent spell of warmer weather. With only a couple of light frosts the soil temperature has remained high and consistent growth rates for all crops and pasture.

WORDS BY CRAIG RODGERS, RURALCO SEED



Feed surpluses have been good with little demand for supplementary feed over the past few weeks and now farmers are looking to manage and transition on to winter crops.

## Cereals

Autumn sown crops were in earlier due to the early harvest, this has resulted in good establishment and growth. It is predicted that autumn sown cereals pricing will be down on the previous year. Grain pricing seems to be holding on the open market and recently released milling contracts are priced similar to last year with a slight rise in softer wheats. All wheat varieties seem to be readily available and at time of writing we were awaiting the 2019 FAR trial results.

There was a large variation in yields across all cereals this past harvest, a mixed bag of weather through the late spring with cooler than normal temperatures left a lot of cereals struggling to fill and reach their full potential. It is estimated that there is an increase of unsold grain on the market and could be as high as 20% more on the previous time last year. While yields were back, the increase in sowings last year and minimal movement of free product post-harvest is signalling that we may have a large surplus in the early spring. There has been some enquiry for wheat through the past couple of months but limited demand for feed barley. This harvest has resulted in good wheat quality and some feed barley has higher than normal screenings which may see a two-tier pricing structure in place this year.

Grain prices have remained stagnant over the past month and there has been limited demand from dairy farmers and other end users. It is likely that demand will increase for the spring period, but most movement throughout the past few months has been for contracted grain.

## Pasture

Pasture renewal has been steady and often weather dependant as we head into late autumn. We are still seeing some late sowings mainly due to early winter grazed crops coming off. Hopefully if we get an early winter, we will get an early spring and once the soil temperatures start heating up, it is an appropriate time to plant but this can depend on soil conditions. Some heavier soil types are too boggy to get implements across in early spring and you are better waiting to the days get longer and warmer.

We have seen steady rainfall through autumn with most being quite heavy at times making paddock conditions very wet for short periods of time, often these paddocks being grazed immediately follow the rain can cause some damage to pasture especially around gateways. Patching these up during winter may not get the desired result and waiting till early spring will be a better option. There are some good options available to help tidy up these areas but ensure you consider what is planned for that paddock in the future. If it is likely to be re-grassed or cropped then a short-term grass or renovation style mix would be suitable, but if it is a well performing or newish pasture then

look to spend a little more to ensure it is back performing to its potential.

If you are having stock on pastures over the winter period, ensure you choose paddocks based on which can handle the conditions ensuring you don't damage too many new or good pastures.

Selection of cultivars is also important and while there can be a variation in pricing the Forage Value Index is a great guide to selecting the grass that will produce best when you need it to, check it out here. Any grass will look good in the first couple of years, but persistence is where you get the greatest value.

## Winter crops

The measuring and grazing of fodder beet is underway and as usual the general variety discussion with farmers is revolving around yield, dry matter content and stock suitability. Early weights are showing a decrease across most varieties compared with last year, however these are improving following the recent favourable weather. The transition period remains the most important process of the fodder beet crop and an independent yield assessment is only a guide as crops can vary in size across a paddock. The most accurate estimation is often measured by what the stock are eating or sometimes what they are leaving behind.

Once again we have seen an increase in kale area this season and crops at this stage are looking fairly good. Most kale crops went in after the cooler spring and have responded well through the late summer and autumn. Overall there seems to be satisfactory amounts of winter feed available and these will only increase as we get some frosts which will bring the dry matter percentage up. If the milder weather continues and ground conditions remain favourable the conversion of feed should be high through the early part of winter.

There seems to be plenty of supplements available of straw, silage and hay.

Forage crops have little effective fibre and supplementation with a high fibre feed like hay, straw and silage is recommended to aid. The transition to winter crops is important and you will need to calculate daily feed allocation carefully to prevent metabolic disorders and to maximise body condition gains.



*Craig Rodgers,  
Ruralco Seed Sales  
Manager*

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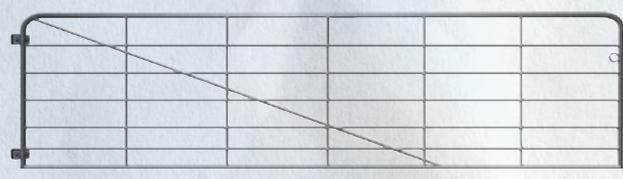
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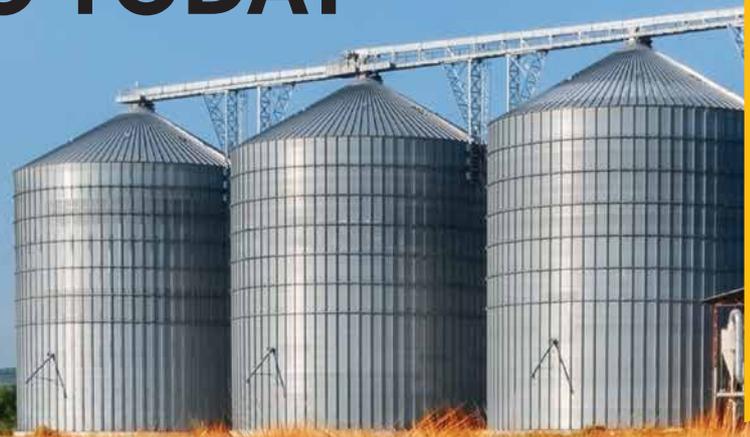
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**SEED**

# Weed control in established lucerne

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



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Lucerne is a 'crop' however we sometimes forget this and don't give it the attention that other crops get in the farming system says Nick George from Orion AgriScience.

The two major factors affecting Lucerne productivity and longevity are fertility and weed competition. Correct grazing and cutting management will encourage Lucerne to grow vigorously which will also limit the opportunity for weeds to establish.

To get the best out of a Lucerne stand it should be sprayed for weeds every winter using a combination of knockdown and residual herbicide. Established Lucerne is sprayed in the winter because this is when it is dormant and will not cause damage.

## KNOCKDOWN HERBICIDE

**Paraquat:** Used as a defoliant. The plant cannot photosynthesis therefore dies. It will control most small seedlings but has limited control on larger plants, especially if they have a taproot or fibrous root. For these reasons the addition of a leaf and/or root absorbed residual herbicide will dramatically improve the spectrum of weeds controlled explains Nick.

## RESIDUAL HERBICIDES

Triazine herbicides are used to accompany paraquat and have varying degrees of control on established weeds as well as providing varying lengths of residual activity. In all situations the stand needs to be 12 months of age or older.

**Atrazine:** Has good knockdown and reasonable residual activity with a soil half life of 35 – 50 days. This is the most commonly used triazine over Lucerne. In Nick's opinion a granular atrazine is preferred over liquid for winter spraying because granules will mix better in cold conditions.

**Simazine:** Little or no knockdown but longer residual activity. Being less water soluble provides longer residual activity with a soil half life of 27 – 102 days. A good choice where not a lot of weeds are present at the time of application but when weeds are expected to germinate in early spring. Good residual control on barley grass and poa. Simazine holds on the longest in light soils.

**Terbuthylazine:** Good knockdown and reasonable residual with a soil half life of 30 – 60 days. It has a better knockdown where clumpy grasses, storksbill, clover and seedling dandelion are present. Lucerne should be 24 months of age or older before applying terbuthylazine and a 4 week withholding period for grazing should be observed.

## TIPS

- Graze Lucerne to expose weeds and allow to freshen before application
- A rain after grazing and before application is beneficial to clean any soil etc off the leaf
- Don't spray in the frost – wait until the paddock has thawed
- Soil moisture during and after application must be adequate for triazines to work
- Clean water is a must – paraquat will deactivate in contaminated or dirty water
- Use 250L/ha of water
- A non-ionic surfactant can be useful to enhance coverage
- Early winter (June) is the best time for application because weeds are small and Lucerne damage on the following spring growth will be prevented
- Note: all product labels should be read before use regarding rates and timing.

For more information, contact your Ruralco Representative today on 0800 787 256.

*Article Supplied by Nick George, Canterbury/West Coast Territory Manager for Orion.*

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OUTSIDE FOR LIFE

# Does the egg industry represent farming's new normal?

The recent shortage of eggs in supermarkets that gained headlines in New Zealand media also attracted attention from news organisations as far away as the UK (the BBC and The Guardian newspaper).

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY MICHAEL BROOKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EGG PRODUCERS FEDERATION OF NEW ZEALAND



To many readers it seems extraordinary that a nation that has long been known around the world for its red meat, dairy and egg production (Kiwis consume 1.3 billion eggs per year) was struggling to supply its own domestic market—but these are extraordinary times.

As recently as 2012, 86 per cent of New Zealand's eggs were produced by the conventional cage production system, known by its detractors as "battery hen" farming. A decision that year by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), the government's independent panel of animal welfare experts, to phase out conventional cage farming in favour of free-range, barn and colony cage farming systems by 2022, presented the egg industry with an enormous task.

Seven years down the line, it is apparent that this is the largest structural change that any

agricultural industry in the world has ever been obliged to make, and in the shortest-ever time.

To its credit, the New Zealand egg industry has responded impressively: by December 2018, the industry reported to the Minister of Agriculture that 44.7 per cent of the national flock was in conventional cage production (down from 83 per cent in December 2013), and free-range and barn production had risen from single-digit percentages in 2012 to 30.6 per cent. The numbers however obscure the considerable degree of change and upheaval has been imposed on the nation's egg farmers.

Studies show that the average cost for an individual farmer of changing from conventional cage production to one of the approved systems is \$1 million; this includes applications for resource consents (sometimes a lengthy process) as well

as investment in new equipment and infrastructure. Unsurprisingly, since 2012 the industry has seen a significant degree of consolidation and "churn", with some participants deciding to exit and others gearing up to compete through acquisitions. A seemingly tough but manageable process of change was complicated further in late 2017 when the country's two major supermarket chains decided to cease stocking colony cage system eggs after 2025. This was a significant shock because after 2012, the industry had seen colony cage production as the best way to ensure both a good volume of eggs nationally and a secure supply of affordable protein for all New Zealanders. In 2013, NAWAC also endorsed colony eggs as offering overall levels of welfare at least equivalent to those of free-range and barn.

The supermarkets' decision, which bowed to social media pressure, produced even more uncertainty and financial anxiety for a significant number of egg farmers. And given that free-range eggs still comprise only 27 per cent of national production – and 70 per cent of all eggs are still produced by colony and conventional cage production – it also set the scene for the current shortage and consequent food insecurity. (The current cost per gram of protein for conventional cage and colony eggs is 4 cents/gram; for free-range it is 11 cents/gram). This "perfect storm" of factors is also considered to be a key factor in the drop in the national flock from 4.2 million to 3 million birds in the current year.

To use an old agricultural term, the egg industry internationally is a bellwether – a member of a flock that leads and signals a trend. Not so long ago, both the public and the media trusted and respected the expertise and integrity of producers, but in the age of computer keyboard activists and social media pressure, that is no longer the world—or the country—we live in. Despite the egg industry's best efforts the public and the media seem either no better informed than they were previously, or in many cases choose to believe the "facts" circulated on social media. It is a lesson with real economic and market consequences, and one that other agricultural sectors should note.

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# Tool uses N test to improve efficiency

With farmers facing increasing pressure to use nutrients more efficiently, nitrogen is increasingly in the spotlight. WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



“One way to improve nitrogen efficiency is by finding out how much nitrogen your soil already has, and using that information to apply nitrogen where it’ll have the most impact. It’s an opportunity to improve financial returns and lessen your environmental footprint,” says Ballance Agri-Nutrients Precision Agriculture Specialist Ollie Knowles.

## Right place, right rate, right time

To help pastoral farmers improve their nitrogen efficiency, Ballance has developed a software tool, My Pasture Planner. The tool uses soil Total N test information from different parts of the farm to identify the most responsive areas, the optimum rate and the best timing for nitrogen fertiliser application. “My Pasture Planner gives you the expertise of AgResearch scientists. It’s been shown to reduce nitrogen loss using OVERSEER modelling by an average of 4 per cent, with a range from 3 to 12 per cent,” says Ollie.

## Small test for big gains

A soil Total N test is done at a depth of 75mm and measures the soil’s total pool of nitrogen: nitrogen currently available for

pasture growth as well as the potential long term supply.

“The soil Total N test is a rather small and infrequent investment to gain further insights into more efficient nitrogen advice. Depending on land management changes, you might only have to do a soil Total N test every five to ten years, as results are generally pretty stable over time,” says Ollie.

## Explore the opportunities

My Pasture Planner helps farmers explore opportunities, and check or change their nitrogen application rates. “If soil Total N varies across the farm, with some low and some high areas, you can use the same overall amount of nitrogen fertiliser, but use more where you’ll get a greater response, and less in other areas,” says Ollie.

“If all areas have high soil Total N, My Pasture Planner can help you to predict likely responses, rather than assuming a typical year round average of 10 kg DM/kg N.” You can also identify which months give a greater return from nitrogen application, by using soil nitrogen levels combined with built-in pasture growth rate data or if you want to make it more farm specific you could use

your farms pasture growth rate data.

“If all areas have low soil Total N, you can get a better idea of responses, instead of using industry averages. You can improve feed budgeting and economical use of nitrogen fertiliser as a low cost supplementary feed. You can also explore the opportunity to support pasture growth and persistence by increasing your nitrogen application rate.”

Farmers can easily access outputs from My Pasture Planner, as it is integrated with MyBallance, an online secure place to keep farm fertiliser information. “Mapping capability makes it simple to create a 12 month nitrogen plan. The MyBallance integration means you see a fertiliser recommendation mapped out for your farm,” Ollie adds.

Ballance has updated and enhanced N-Guru to produce My Pasture Planner. My Pasture Planner is owned exclusively by Ballance, and is available to Ballance customers registered with MyBallance.

Existing Ballance customers can register at [myballance.co.nz](http://myballance.co.nz). To find out more about becoming a Ballance customer contact your local Ruralco Representative today.



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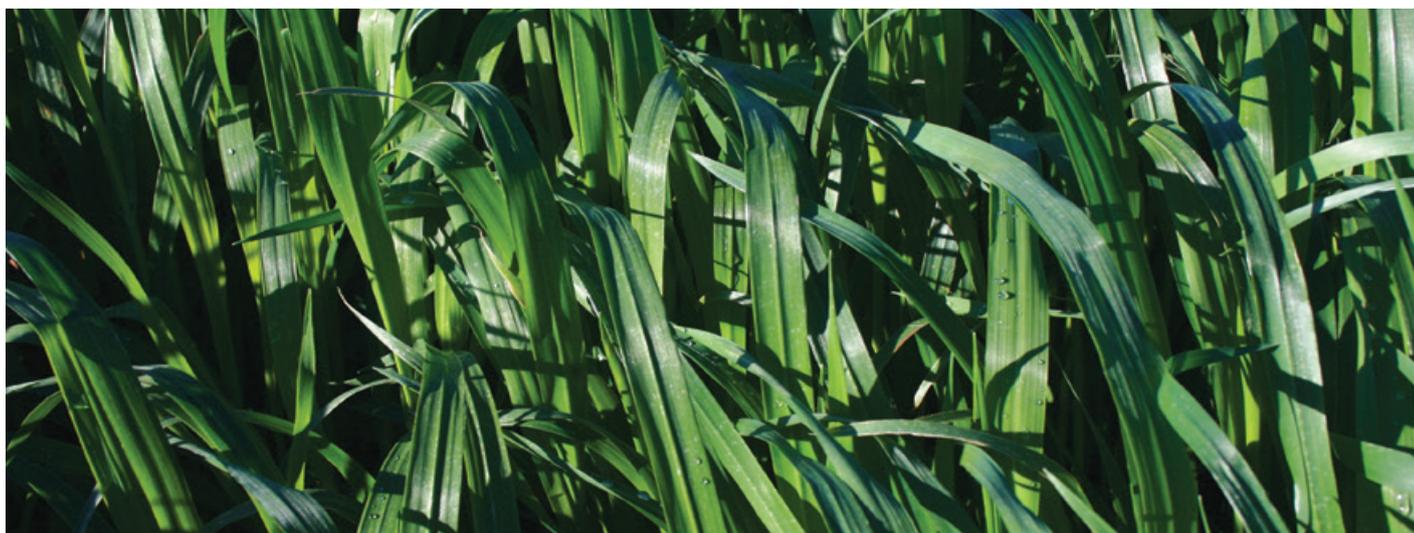
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# Cereal silage on the menu as farmers work towards farming sustainability

The renewed interest in cereals has come about from a change in land stewardship and environmental awareness around “soaker crops”. There is also greater awareness around the merits of feeding high carbohydrate supplements to better utilise rumen microbial protein in pasture based systems. WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM



Soaker crops are becoming an obligation in many river catchments nationally and cereals are a well-adapted species to serve this function. Unlike many other species, cereals have the ability to germinate at soil temperatures below 5 degrees which makes them an ideal option coming out of a winter crop or as alternatives to annual ryegrass after a maize crop.

When cereals are at a young growth stage the nitrogen (N) percentage in the plant can be very high (5% N) due to their ability to take up luxury amounts of N. This makes cereals very efficient at taking up surplus N after a winter crop. For example, a cereal crop planted in the early spring out of a winter crop will leach significantly less nitrogen than leaving the ground fallow. The other major benefit to water quality from planting cereal silage lies in a cereal crops high ability to hold soil and reduce surface runoff. This consequently has the potential to decrease the amount of Phosphorous and Ecoli entering waterbodies. Nutritionally, cereals can increase feed conversion efficiency (the amount of feed needed to produce 1kg of saleable product). During spring, when the amount of protein in ryegrass is excess to requirements, feeding cereal high in soluble carbohydrates reduces the overall protein content of the diet and provides energy for rumen bacteria, assisting in N utilisation and live weight and milk production. Diets high in N and low in carbohydrate are at a higher risk of leaching from increased concentrations of N in urine.

Cereal crops don't only offer benefits to the environment and animal production systems. Cereals can be very profitable to grow. As an example, the costs to establish cereals can be as low as \$1200/ha with the final c/kg/DM grown as low as 9-16c/kg/DM (excluding ensiling). It's important however to not look at growing costs in isolation as crops with the lowest growing costs are not generally the most profitable. Yield and quality can be poor in low cost crop systems so it's advisable to seek advice on the cost benefit of various inputs like fungicides and nitrogen application(s) to ensure the most profitable crop.

If the decision to grow cereals has been made the main caveat with cereal silage is an agronomy program. It needs to be focused on timing and crop inputs. Historically many growers of cereals have been disappointed by the yield and quality as a consequence of crop disease, poor timing or the wrong cultivar selection. The quality of well grown cereal silage is on par with Maize silage when it's managed well and kept clean from disease. Time of sowing, nutrient availability and weed/fungal control are among the most critical factors when growing cereals. Planting date has a major impact on total yield and in general the earlier the crop is planted the more yield you are likely to get.

Weed control in cereals is very straightforward and can often be the difference between 2-3t/DM/ha. Timing is critical and a good rule of thumb with cereals is to target a weed/ herbicide application 4-6 weeks post planting.

The two ways in which forage cereals can be harvested are:

1. Green Chop. This silage requires a wilting process similar to spring grass silage. Ideally, the crop should be wilted down to around 30% dry matter to ensure ideal ensiling. Fine chop and seal well in a pit or stack, or round bale and wrap. The optimal stage for green chop is before the seed head emerges at the “booting stage”.
2. Whole Crop Cereal Silage. The correct stage to harvest whole-crop silage is when the grain has reached its full size and weight, but before it becomes hard. If you pull off the outer coating of the seed, the inside of the grain will be white and have a texture similar to white cheese.

NB: Forage Oats should never be harvested for Whole Crop Cereal Silage (when the seed head has emerged) as the husks on the seed create a low utilisation by livestock.

From an autumn planting Milton oats offer fast reliable high yielding single cut silage. Coronet oats are slightly different in their style as they tend to be more leafy and later in maturity.

Agricom market an extensive range of forage cereal cultivars that offer farmers high quality grazing or silage options. Having a highly regarded relationship with Plant and Food Research, trial work and evaluation is conducted at sites nationwide to identify superior cultivars that will perform in a wide range of environments.





# Effluent ponds— how much storage do you need?

Having the right infrastructure in place is essential to managing effluent on farm. DairyNZ's effluent expert Logan Bowler talks about the key factors that will help you work out how much effluent storage you need for your farm.

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY LOGAN BOWLER, DAIRYNZ

I'm a firm believer that you can't do a good job if you don't have the right equipment, and the same applies to managing effluent on farm.

No matter how well you manage your effluent storage pond, if it's too small, you're going to struggle.

So, just how much storage do you need?

Everyone's requirements are different depending on their farm. Just because your neighbour has a certain sized pond, doesn't mean that's the right fit for you.

**"I can now relax knowing in wet weather we can pump into the pond."**

If you're considering installing or upgrading your effluent system, there are a number of factors to take into account to determine how much storage your farm requires. These include shed water use, herd size, season length and application depths.

But the biggest factor to take into consideration is your soil type.

If you have high risk soils your storage requirements will be significantly more (five to six times more) than those with low risk, as you won't be able to irrigate as frequently.

High risk soils are those that exhibit surface run off and/or preferential flow. While low risk are well or moderately well-drained soils on slopes less than seven degrees.

If you're not sure if your soils are high or low risk, there's a pocket guide available on the DairyNZ website to help you identify the soil risk for effluent irrigation on your farm.

Soils and 'future-proofing' key factors for farmer

Soils were a key factor Waikato dairy farmer Ian Taylor took into account when determining what sized pond to install on his farm.

Ian, who farms 440-cows on consolidated peat soils in Puketaha, decided to put in a pond with plastic liner that exceeded his requirements.

"I thought I'd err on the side of caution and go bigger. I went for a pond twice the size

than I needed, at 2100 cubic meters.

"I didn't want to end up building a pond that was too small, so I built one as big as I could in order to future-proof any changes that might come in later or down the track."

Ian did a lot of research before deciding on what size and type of pond he would install to determine what system was best for his farm and team.

He says he choose a relatively simple system as he wanted to reduce operator error.

He recommends farmers consider all their options and use soil experts to determine whether they have any low risk soils.

"There can be a three to five-fold difference in the size of the pond depending on whether you have high or low risk soils."

Ian says having the right infrastructure in place makes effluent management less stressful.

"I can now relax knowing in wet weather we can pump into the pond."

If you're considering installing or upgrading your effluent system and you're not sure where to start, there's some great information on the DairyNZ website. There's also the free Dairy Effluent Storage Calculator to help you get a better idea of how much effluent storage you need.

Last, but certainly not least, I highly recommend using an accredited effluent system design company. After-all, it's a big investment, so you want to make sure it's done right.

For more information to help you make the right decision when installing or upgrading your effluent system, or for a list of accredited effluent system design companies, visit [dairynz.co.nz/effluent](http://dairynz.co.nz/effluent).



*Logan Bowler is a DairyNZ environmental extension specialist and effluent management expert.*



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# Health planning for the upcoming season

As calving approaches, planning for a successful lactation becomes a high priority. We are now about to come to the end of the current breeding season and embark on the next big phase in the cow's life cycle. Many investments go into establishing a pregnancy and leading it to a successful completion, so taking some time now to plan the next season will be time well spent.

WORDS BY IAN HODGE, VETENT



Let's take a look at some of the big areas where some planning will reap the greatest rewards.

## Mastitis

Mastitis is a multifactorial disease which can be well controlled by addressing more than one issue. First calving heifers can be teat sealed to prevent calving mastitis. This is a well proven strategy which if done at the appropriate time and in the correct way can reduce new clinical cases of mastitis by as much as 50%. Heifers should be teat sealed at a point 4 weeks prior to their first calving event. The effect of reducing the mastitis challenge at calving will last for several weeks into the heifer's lactation and the return on investment for doing this can be significant.

IMAGE: It is critical that cows are not allowed to lose more than one body condition score between calving and mating

If possible, cows and heifers can be brought to the cow shed and teat sprayed several times per week in the three weeks prior to calving. This will also reduce the calving mastitis challenge and maintain good teat skin condition.

At calving, the things to concentrate on are teat spray coverage, teat cleanliness prior to milking, and milk out. Your milking machine may have been tested during winter but may well require a PureMilk milking time mastitis risk assessment in order to prevent mastitis from becoming significant.

## Cow body condition

It is critical that cows are not allowed to lose more than one body condition score between calving and mating. This is a very difficult challenge as cows do not eat to full capacity for up to 10 weeks after calving. You must know the actual energy value of the diet and be prepared to change quantities fed if your cows are losing body condition. Be ready to monitor cows energy status and involve your vet to check for any evidence of either clinical or sub clinical ketosis.

## Cow Health

Deal with individual cow health events as they occur. Cows with post calving diseases will eat less and lose more body condition than healthy herd mates. Uterine infections (metritis) are common and must be dealt with correctly. Again involve your herd veterinarian for the best advice. As well as metritis, ketosis, rumen diseases, metabolic diseases and lameness can all lead to reduced production and eventually sub-optimal reproductive performance.

## Metabolic diseases

Prevention is better than cure. If you have proven preventive strategies stick with them, but also be prepared to change if you have good reason to. Monitoring cows regularly for evidence of metabolic diseases is very important.

## Reproductive Success

Planning for a high six week in calf rate and low empty rate starts now. By controlling mastitis, body condition, post-calving diseases and delivering the correct nutrition to the herd, you will optimize your chances of good reproductive performance. Remember that you will be tail painting the herd somewhere around the 15th of September to capture as many pre-mating heats as possible. Accurate heat detection is critical to achieve high submission rates and conception rates. You may be planning to synchronize some or all of your cycling cows, and you may have decided to use teasers with the non-cycling cows to promote the development of cycling activity in that group.

But right now spend some time assessing the winter body condition of the cows. Perhaps some of them need preferentially feeding? Draft them accurately as they approach calving to help avoid metabolic issues in the Springer herds. But most importantly go and have a consultation in the warm vet clinic with your vet. It will be time very well spent.

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# Beware of the ‘good deal for you’

**The electricity business has hotted up for winter in Canterbury with the arrival of some new players in the retailing sector. Suddenly there are plenty of good deals flying around, aimed at farmers considering a change before the sharp end of their power consumption season kicks off.**

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

But Ruralco Energy general manager Tracey Gordon is cautioning Ruralco members to take a deep breath, stand back and carefully scrutinise those deals—all the while remembering that if something looks too good to be true, then it usually is.

She is urging power shoppers to carefully go through every aspect of the electricity bill and identify where that ‘good deal’ will come from before making the jump to a new retailer.

## The “Is it such a good deal?” check list

### CAPACITY CHARGE

The biggest component of electricity bills in recent years for rural Canterbury buyers has been the dreaded Capacity Charge. This charge took a significant leap upwards two years ago, thanks to a shift in how it was calculated lowering last season but now increasing again as of 1 April 2019.

Sometimes the lower Capacity Charge price is also disguised by classifying it as a short-term cost with a discount included.

“So really look hard at where they are pulling that Capacity Charge cost comparison from when that quote is made.”

### CHECK THE POWER SOURCE

With non-generating retailers getting into the market it is also important to question them closely on where they are purchasing their power from, and the implications of pulling out of a contract you are not happy with.

“Often these companies will buy your load in your contract forward and be carrying that cost, so it may cost you whatever your load cost is to exit that contract, which makes it very expensive.”

What may look good over the coming couple of months may in fact be a poor deal over the longer term run of the season.

### GST—IN OR OUT?

It is a simple enough point but one that is being played upon in some of the deals on offer. Meridian is the only company that includes GST within every line of its calculations, with other companies keeping GST separate, adding it in at the bottom of the bill’s ex-GST total.

### WINTER VERSUS SUMMER

Depending on your farm or business type it is possible to choose a “flat” load charge or a summer-winter load charge. Typically for homeowners a flat load charge works out the best, based on an even spread of the

cost over the year. Be very cautious about comparing a flat load charge quote to a winter account for the farm, this will only give a misleading comparison, making the flat load quote look better.

“You really need to compare it across the whole year’s consumption, otherwise you really are not getting a sense of where the entire cost will fall for you.”

### DAILY CHARGES—NO DEAL MAKER

Daily charges do not form a significant part of a farm electricity user’s bill, often amounting to only a couple of dollars a day. For that reason they should not become the reason for dropping an electricity retailer for a better deal. Instead it is the per kW charge that matters when you are using thousands of kW hours’ worth of power a year.

Overall, it is important not to get hung up on what the discount is that a company may be offering on a new deal. With more and more companies moving to “Naked Rates” where the discount is already calculated into a rate you need to look at the bottom line of what will I have to pay at the end of the month not what your discount is.

If you have been made an offer that looks too good to refuse, then it may pay to discuss it with Ruralco’s electricity experts. We know power costs inside out, and can offer an independent, realistic assessment of the deal, and point out where the fishhooks might be that could make getting out of it tough and expensive.

Contact Tracey Gordon at Ruralco Energy on 0800 787 256.



# Taking integrated on farm data and control systems to the next level

Christchurch based company Onfarm Data has recently purchased the assets of Streat Instruments Ltd and is now streamlining its operations and is offering a whole new innovative approach to integrated farm data solutions. The addition of the well-respected Aquaflex soil monitoring and telemetry solutions is a real bonus for clients.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ONFARM DATA

Managing Director Andrew Neill has over 15 years in the agricultural water management industry and is well aware of the current changing market, and while there are plenty of data providers in this industry, Onfarm Data offers much more than just data on a smartphone.

“It’s a simple concept. We want our clients to have a great web-based interface with up to date, accurate data, that allows them to look at their phone and make operational decisions on a day to day basis, either as an owner, manager, 2IC or staff member. The second part of what we do is control; the added value of controlling your systems, be it turning on your irrigator, pump, zones of sprinklers or planning your effluent or fertigation schedule based on the effluent pond levels or individual soil moisture site.”

Onfarm Data can provide an integrated solution for a whole range of data sources. They can supply and monitor dairy shed, stock water, effluent and irrigation flowmeters for consent and compliance and also level monitoring of effluent and irrigation ponds. They provide weather stations and rain gauges as well as effluent and fertigation monitoring which is essential in terms of environmental management planning.

“Effluent & fertigation monitoring and control is a growing market. Our control & data logging systems means it is easier to demonstrate good environmental management practice,” Andrew explains. Due to health and safety issues grain silo monitoring is another popular service. Having a monitoring device on a smartphone makes life

much easier for clients rather than using a safety harness and physically checking levels.

“We’re essentially working everywhere outside of the dairy shed and focusing on your liquids—water, stock water, effluent, fertiliser. How much liquid and how is it being managed and is there good data around it.”

The business is unique in that it manufactures, supplies, installs, monitors and services their clients on farm monitoring devices. It also provides the additional web services of device control and data recording to build a solid farm specific database over time. “It really is a closed loop with a single point of contact. We’ve got the data solution, we’ve got the technical support and on farm service team to back it up and I really think that’s significantly different from what

other data companies do."The system is designed for smartphones and is very user friendly with a login shortcut on your phone.

On Farm Data also manufactures, supplies, installs and monitors their patented Aquaflex sensor. Designed at Lincoln University over twenty-five years ago Aquaflex is a soil moisture and temperature monitoring system. Andrew confirms that in recent years customers have seen the importance of accurate and complete data around soil monitoring and how the unique Aquaflex three step approach puts it very much ahead of its competitors. "Firstly, it's identifying the right location by understanding the irrigation and soil types. Then the Aquaflex has to be installed properly and finally you have to understand the data, and display it correctly to get maximum benefit from the system. Yes, our system sits at a higher cost price point but over time it is very cost effective as our customers know they can have absolute confidence in the data they are viewing and using."

The fact that Aquaflex and its telemetry unit are manufactured in house is another significant benefit as the team have complete quality control around the system. Andrew and the team at Onfarm Data recognise the importance of data accuracy as well as safeguarding the reputation of their premium Aquaflex brand. With this in mind they will continue to use their direct selling and established distribution network, but have added another step to allow only certified installers to install their product.

"It's easy to just bury a device in the ground but with soil monitoring there are so many factors around soil and proper installation at each individual site. Soil type is key and we know the expectation of where the trace values should be. A lot of companies are just data companies and don't care what data is showing. The difference with us is we monitor data, have trained staff who can recognise an issue, be it interference or an installation problem. We've got the technical support to identify that and alert our customer and log in remotely if we have to fix something. That's fundamentally different from a lot of other service providers out there. Moving forward, key strategic partners will allow us to access the Aquaflex data to ensure data integrity. It's all part of the service."

The business is very excited about the launch of its latest addition to the Aquaflex system—Aquaflex Dataview PRO—a seven-day forecasting tool and Andrew believes this new product will be a gamechanger in the farm irrigation management industry.

"Having an operational tool on your phone, specific to your irrigator or soil site, is a huge step forward in terms of irrigation scheduling and management. Working with predicted rainfall and the ability to see how your planned irrigation events will affect soil moisture levels from your phone allows the end user to make daily operational management decisions. This allows a greater clarity around environmental irrigation, fertigation and effluent management practice"

As well as ongoing monitoring, Onfarm Data, as part of the Aquaflex Dataview PRO service, offers



ABOVE: Managing Director Andrew Neill has over 15 years in the agricultural water management industry and is well aware of the current changing market

on-site training and specialised field assistance as well as access to a large external base of soil consultants.

"We've over 7,000 Aquaflex units sold worldwide and 4,500 telemetry units in operation nationwide, we've accumulated a huge knowledge base and can resolve any issue."

As part of their service, Onfarm Data also logs in twice a year to each individual client and assesses all Aquaflex sites and consults with each client to measure and clarify that all data is tracking correctly with no anomalies.

"New Zealand farmers are very well educated when it comes to their own farms and we work together to ensure every Aquaflex soil site is as it should be, it's a premium product and a premium service," Andrew confirms.

Irrigation control systems are another area of specialisation for Onfarm Data. Their OFD SCADA control system is one of the very few systems that can offer the option of Variable Rate Application (VRA) on solid set/fixed grid sprinklers. Being able to make daily irrigation changes to sprinkler zones at the click of a button is a huge benefit to customers. They can have zones excluded or apply different rates for different management strategies, like fertigation application, excluding zones for silage or spraying etc. They have the ability to not only turn on and off pumps and pivots but control individual sprinklers and sprinkler zones and their hardware is also compatible with all brands of irrigators.

"The level of control our system offers is exceptional and we do much more than just provide irrigation data, we're providing an integrated approach across devices controlling irrigation, effluent, fertigation, sprinkler zones and being able to integrate other data points such as soil monitoring and flow is essential."

Andrew acknowledges that its very much a complex market and has a very pragmatic

approach to business and working with distributors and strategic business partners.

"We don't want to run the world; we know what we're very specialised in and if we can't do something then we're happy to work in with other suppliers. Our rural customers don't want to pay twice for the same services so we can export data or import data from other service providers. At the end of the day it's about getting the best solution for the end user and we're 100% customer focused."

As Managing Director Andrew is involved in all aspects of the business on a daily basis and is always available to any customer. Being a local business, he and the entire Onfarm Data team likes to build a strong rapport with customers and not having a corporate structure means the decision-making process is direct and this allows them to achieve positive outcomes.

The Onfarm Data team believe a strong partnership with Ruralco is a great pathway to continue to build their products and services across the Canterbury and New Zealand market and they are offering cardholders a 10% discount on hardware and ongoing monitoring costs.

Andrew encourages cardholders to consider the advantages of the Onfarm Data products and services as a total data solution for their farm.

"We're not just putting sensors in, there are a lot of companies out there doing that, it's the whole package. We're not only specialised soil monitors but we specialise in all on farm data sources and converting that to added value by offering easy to use decision making data and control easier. We monitor and service everything so you have one point of contact along with our continued assistance and support."



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Engineering Solutions Ltd is located at 201 Alford Forest Rd and offers a wide range of services for the engineering, dairy and pumping sectors.

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS



Between the owners Luke Maginness and Hayden Bonnington, they cover a wide range of skills and experience. Luke has a background in machining and maintenance while Hayden is experienced in fabrication and maintenance. With a growing staff of seven we are able to handle a wide range of projects from large design and build projects too smaller repair jobs. Recent projects include a large rotary screen retrieval system, new dairy yards and feed pads, structural steel, rebuilding and machining components for oil press machines and pump maintenance for irrigation schemes.

Engineering Solutions have always produced backing gates and dairy yards, and these services have been on the increase over the past four years. They have a solar powered wireless backing gate for rectangular yards, which is the only product like it available. Engineering Solutions also builds rotary backing gates and top gates for round yards with their own set of centre posts and water glands. These rotary backing gates and top gates are built extremely durable and designed using the latest technologies. Our centre posts are quite unique, you can run a separate line for green water and clean water. Recently we have been upgrading

many existing centre posts in yards to include rotary water glands and electrical glands. These upgrades can be customised to the existing setup and to the customer's requirements.

Engineering Solutions also has a lot of work on in the pumping side of the business, as the service agent for many of the local irrigation schemes, including Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation, Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation and most recently have earned the maintenance contract for Amuri Irrigation.

A big part of our pumping service is setting up maintenance schedules for our clients, we do vibration testing and pump performance tests and record all the data to give scheme providers an accurate picture of the current condition of all the pumps. This data allows us to make informed decisions on future maintenance requirements and helps improve reliability and downtime. Along with the irrigation schemes, many farmers are also taking up this option.



ABOVE: Our experience and equipment allows us to manufacture and repair parts for farmers and contractors

LEFT: Engineering Solutions also has a lot of work on in the pumping side of the business, as the service agent for many of the local irrigation schemes

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Engineering Solutions provides a comprehensive engineering service which includes design, fabrication, and machining, and is happy to take on most projects. We have a well-equipped workshop and a dedicated professional team who pride ourselves on being innovative and building quality products that will benefit our customers.



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# Water tax off the table for now

**In a positive development for irrigators, we saw the government announce recently that they won't introduce a water tax.**

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY ELIZABETH SOAL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF IRRIGATIONNZ

Farmers across the country have been breathing a sigh of relief at the news. The cumulative impact of taxes on fertiliser, water pollution, capital gains and water could have had a huge impact on farmer's ability to operate, while other sectors would escape most of these new taxes.

Irrigators would have been particularly affected by tax changes as even a small water tax could have added tens of thousands of dollars to their annual operations, in addition to other new taxes. At the same time, we know that the government wants to reform environmental legislation which is expected to result in new requirements for farmers. There is little understanding in the wider community that imposing new requirements on farmers usually has a significant financial impact—for example through requiring newer technology to be adopted.

A water tax would also have had a disproportionate impact on Canterbury and Otago—both on farmers and even on residential households. Both regions have lower than average rainfall and irrigation is widely used on farms and in gardens.

Whether the money raised from a water tax is used to fund river restoration or anything else it's hard to justify why farmers and residents in areas like Canterbury and Otago should pay several times more than other regions would in a water tax.

IrrigationNZ has been advocating against the introduction of a water tax since the idea was proposed in 2017 and has made two submissions to the tax review process, as well as meeting with Tax Working Group representatives and a number of politicians. Like our irrigator members, we are very pleased this has been taken off the table for this parliamentary term, although the idea could be back in future election campaigns.

Recently, the Ministry of Primary Industries released a survey of 700 farmers which makes for interesting reading. The survey was carried out nationwide and covered dairy, sheep, beef and arable farms, and horticulture and viticulture properties.

It found that 92% of farmers had taken some action in recent years to make their farm more environmentally sustainable, with many farmers carrying out multiple activities. Some of the top actions farmers reported taking were carrying out planting and fencing, improving their fertiliser management or shifting to using organic fertilisers and improving their irrigation systems.

We need to acknowledge that there has been a lot of effort put in on farms in recent years and this is having an impact in the latest water quality data.

But there is clearly more work to be done to improve our environment. We would like to see the focus for the future be targeted to actions which are practical, affordable and have been shown through science to result in measurable environmental improvements.



*Elizabeth Soal,  
IrrigationNZ Chief  
Executive*



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# Agri-chemical update

A closer look at Autumn sown arable crops, barley grass control in pasture, and weed control in Lucerne. WORDS BY BILL CABOUT, RURALCO FARM SUPPLIES



## Autumn Sown Arable Crops:

### AUTUMN SOWN CEREAL CROPS

Most autumn sown crops have already been planted by now. Seed treatment only persists for a certain amount of time after planting until the start of tillering (GS21). Those crops drilled before mid-April will now not be protected from aphids. Aphids can carry the Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus (BYDV), if your crop gets BYDV at an early stage, this will severely damage the yield. It is a good idea to apply an approved insecticide even, if numbers of aphids are low as this often proves to be good insurance. Depending on what the aphid numbers do (Dependent on weather, cold and wet means less aphids) will determine if we need to follow up three weeks later with another spray. A good way to check up on aphid numbers is to check the Lincoln Suction Trap data on the FAR website [www.far.org.nz](http://www.far.org.nz). Diazinon granules at drilling will provide up to five weeks' protection from grass grub so this protection will also be wearing off. If you find grass grub is close to the soil surface, your crop may need spraying to control these with Dew 600. This is ideally put on during rain so it washes into the soil where the grubs are. If you have drilled with Suscon green you should be covered for the life of the crop.

Slugs have been an ongoing issue in crops throughout the autumn. Monitor your crops closely and if need be, apply more slug bait.

If you have some early weed strike not controlled by your pre-emergent spray, it is ideal to clean this up while the weeds are small. Talk to your Ruralco Account Manager for the best weed control options.

For the control of brome grass, we can use Rexade, it has the same active ingredients as Simplicity (Pyroxsulam) plus the addition of Arylex. This combination controls wild oats, rye grasses and brome grass as well as many significant broadleaf weeds such as fumitory, chickweed, cleavers, field pansy, speedwell, shepherds purse, white clover and volunteer linseed. It can be applied from GS13 to GS31. If applying to control brome it can be applied twice otherwise once only. The rate used is 100g/ha plus 250ml non-ionic surfactant /100lt water and is available in a 2kg pack. Please check the withholding periods for planting following crops as it is up to 12 months currently on some crops. This product is for wheat and triticale only.

If you are planting wheat and barley during the winter months you can use Firebird or Invado pre-emergent up to the 30 July. After this date, it doesn't work as effectively as the weeds grow too fast.

### WHITE CLOVER SEED CROPS

Kerb 500F or Fiera can be applied to white clover seed crops the winter months from June to August for the control of grass weeds and some broadleaf weeds. Weeds not controlled by kerb can be controlled

by various products depending on weed spectrum during July and August.

### RYEGRASS SEED CROPS

As most ryegrass seed crops were in the ground early this year an early post emergence spray is worth looking at to control any weeds that have appeared in the paddocks. In early spring herbicide is recommended to control wild oats.

### Barley Grass Control:

For control of Barley Grass in your pastures, apply Nortron/Claw at 4lts per ha. Timing is important when applying these products, the recommended timing of the herbicide application should be after the main germination has occurred following autumn rains. There is residual activity from about 8-10 weeks, therefore timing is essential to ensure that the residual activity is effective during the period of spring germination of the weed. Ideally apply during the last week in June or first week in July.

### Weed Control in Lucerne:

It is highly important to control weeds in lucerne during the winter dormancy period, before the onset of spring growth so there is no crop damage or suppression. Paraquat is the ideal broad-spectrum weed control for lucerne as it provides excellent control of annual and many perennial broadleaf weeds, plus most grass weeds. Paraquat can be mixed with a residual herbicide, such as atrazine, to provide season-long weed control. Atrazine should not be applied to stands less than 12 months old. Terbutylazine (Asset) can also be used but limited to stands older than 24 months. Stands 6-12 months old can be sprayed with paraquat only. Any weeds not controlled by this can be looked at again in the spring.

### Monitoring Stored Grain:

Monitoring grain during storage is a valuable tool in maintaining quality. This becomes more important the longer the grain remains in storage. Temperature and moisture content are key indicators of grain quality that influence insect and mould activity. Once grain is in storage, monitoring for insects and mould once a month will give early notice of any problems occurring and action can then be taken to control these problems.

For further information on all the above, get in contact the Ruralco team.



*Bill Cabout,  
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# Innovative technology taking farming operations to the next level



IMAGE: Levno is viewed on a simple dashboard using a cell phone, tablet or computer and the system is partnered with major fuel companies

**Palmerston North based technology firm Levno has only been operating for five years, but the buzz around their ground-breaking fuel and milk monitoring systems certainly has Ruralco cardholders talking.**

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGE SUPPLIED BY LEVNO

A recent article in Real Farmer magazine explained how the Internet of Things technology has increased farm productivity, and cited Levno as a prime example. This generated huge interest in the company with their unique patented fuel and milk monitoring devices. Levno is the brainchild of founder Larry Ellison. A dairy farmer himself as well as an ex owner of a fuel company, he realised the need for farmers to accurately measure their fuel tanks.

"I wanted to design something that offered peace of mind to farmers against theft and I also knew that fuel companies could provide a much better service to farmers if they knew how much fuel was left in the tanks." He admits it was a tough journey to achieve his goal, "fuel tanks usually are in remote locations in the middle of paddocks with no cell reception and the explosive nature of the fuel meant designing the right electronics took time." The patented Levno system measures fuel volume in the tank, stores and reports the data in a cloud-based system and customers can receive an alert via text or e-mail for withdrawals, refills and low-levels.

Levno is viewed on a simple dashboard using a cell phone, tablet or computer and the system is partnered with major fuel companies so once the fuel volume drops to a specified level the fuel company is alerted and able to organise a delivery. "Our customers are 100% satisfied with the system. It's so simple and easy to manage and once the Levno system is in place the problem of any fuel shrinkage always reduces. We charge a small one-off set up fee and \$25 per month to monitor one tank plus \$9 for any additional tanks on the same site," Larry explains.

An additional bonus of the Levno system is that the data is so accurate it can be used to allocate fuel to various farm vehicles and ultimately reconcile fuel excise claims from the NZTA. This is a huge cost and time-saving benefit for rural businesses. Levno is partnered with Refunded—a fuel excise tax refund service and the whole process is now much easier. "The whole claims procedure has been automated making it so easy for the farmer to claim a refund, in prior times rural clients used their accountant or tax refund specialist as it was complex but thanks to Levno and Refunded the entire process is now automatic and can save them many hundreds of dollars."

A monthly subscription to Refunded is \$30, this includes the Levno \$25 monitoring fee meaning in simple terms that an additional \$5 per month makes fuel refunds much easier to manage.

The data from Levno is collated and sent by Refunded to the NZTA and the commission-free NZTA refund is sent to your nominated bank account. "The partnership between Levno and Refunded is very streamlined and makes fuel monitoring, reconciliation and refunds so much easier for the customer," says Larry.

Following on from the success of the fuel monitoring system and as a dairy farmer himself Larry saw a gap in the market for milk vat monitoring. Larry and his team went about designing a system for milk vats that monitored volumes, temperatures and milking times and sent alerts to the customer if there were any issues. Levno is now the largest milk vat telemetry supplier nationwide and thanks to their alert system the average farmer saves \$9,000 annually in milk wastage costs.

"Our customers love the product; any refrigeration or chiller issues are immediately picked up and the customer is alerted giving them time to remedy the problem before the milk is wasted." Levno provides the equipment and charges a monthly fee of \$80. "With the equipment provided there is no huge capital investment, it's a subscription-based model so you don't end up spending thousands of dollars and if you don't like it then you simply opt out, there is very little risk to the client with this model." Due to the success of its fuel and milk systems the company has also branched into water monitoring.

Thousands of their fuel devices are now in operation throughout NZ and last year the company monitored over 1.2 billion litres of milk. "We're very proud of what we've achieved, growing into the biggest and most successful NZ farm data monitoring company."

Ruralco Cardholders now have the opportunity to trial these revolutionary products. Levno is offering an exclusive six-month trial of both fuel monitoring and milk vat monitoring to cardholders, the monthly subscription fee will be waived for both services, but an installation fee is payable for set-up. "Customers can opt out anytime, but we have a 99% uptake on our services, clients are always very satisfied with our products and we're happy to welcome Ruralco Cardholders on board."

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### STANDARD SIZES

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- 2440 x 1225mm

### EXTRAS

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

## TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



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• 15mm plywood floor • Trailcom coupling 1 7/8" std • Stop tail indicator lights incl. plug • Std 12 month warranty • WOF supplied • LED lights

### FINISH

• Hot dipped galvanised

### STANDARD SIZES

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

### EXTRAS

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

## TANDEM AXLE TRAILER



### STANDARD FEATURES

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

### FINISH

• Hot dipped galvanised

### STANDARD SIZES

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

### EXTRAS

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

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# The issues behind the inaction

As we move toward the winter it is time to pause and reflect back on the farm sales season of 2018/19.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY MARK LEMON, PROPERTY BROKERS



We see a season with a low level of sales. The two seasons prior had seen a slowing of activity after a few busy years in the earlier part of the decade, but this last season has reminded some of our more seasoned agents of other periods in their careers when large dollops of resilience is required. One is often heard to quote the saying, "When things are down there is no way that people can ever see it going up, and when things are up, there is no way that people can see it coming back." Farming has its good times and its difficult times. Those of us with a few years of experience just have to look back on the ups and downs in our farming careers. Remember the Rodger Douglas era? I clearly remember the famous David Lange's quip of that time 'Farming was a sunset industry'. Remember how we were to be the Financial Centre for the South Pacific or was it The World? A share market crash put paid to that illusion. I see that last month, the Country's balance of payments for the most recently measured period showed a huge current account surplus, with the main contributors being dairy, meat and tourism respectively. This huge contribution, which gets little or no recognition in the mainstream media, is a result of some very good prices being achieved for these primary products being exported. Why then is the farming sector so lacking in confidence?

A confidence that is needed to enter into or grow a farming business.

In the 1980's product prices were low, and returns were made lower to the farmer by the withdrawal of the farming support payments that had been built into returns by successive governments. They were tough times as the SMP and subsidy rug was 'yanked' away from farming. It was survive if you can. Some did and some didn't and had to exit farming.

This downturn which was politically driven by Douglas and his tight group of supporters in the government of the day. Just to add to the pressure there was a three-year drought here in Canterbury in the middle of it. For those that survived, eventually we came to see the cold turkey treatment as a good thing to have happened. It was the early to mid-1990's before we felt things were better. It is still very real to those who farmed through that period.

In today's environment, I see some similarities to those days.

Again, the politicians are playing a hand, this time on the environment front, from both the Government and the Regional Councils. The councils themselves are largely being directed by the Freshwater Policies of Central Government.

Like the 1980's, farming has to deal with this storm and work its way through it. I think in time we will look back and see the positives. But it is hard to see at the moment

with the early implementation stages of nutrient loss management, understanding Good Management Practice policies and the inadequacies of the computer modelling tool that is Overseer. Currently it is still a minefield to navigate, lots of questions and angst at the frustrations of very few tangible answers available.

Within our Real Estate work, we are coming to grips with Consents to Farm, the splitting of Consents to Farm upon a sale, allocations between soil types and many of the anomalies between farms and farm types on nutrient loss limits allowed. It will all be better understood and workable with time. But as like the 1980's this is a long race to run. It is having an impact on farm sales.

The other politically driven environmental issue, under the banner of Climate Change, is the Emission Trading Scheme. The taxing of animal gases. Simon Upton, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment recently came out with a reasoned argument for the treatment of animal emissions to be different to the treatment of fossil fuel emissions. This report, calling for a Two-Tier Emissions Trading Scheme, appears to be the catalyst for a more realistic government stance on this issue.

The thoughts of Steven Cranston, a Waikato based agricultural advisor, are also worth mention. He is asking questions through the Official Information Act around the carbon offsetting capability of agriculture. It seems that no one has yet completed a net emissions budget which includes both emissions and the amount of carbon offsets from say farm trees. There is no data at all relating to the areas of trees [estimated at 1.4million hectares], or the amount of carbon sequestered on farms. Without the data it is impossible to complete a net emissions budget and impossible to calculate agricultures NET contribution to climate change. He argues for net emissions not gross emissions figures to determine agricultures obligations to the ETS. A work in progress and sure to be covered when the Government releases its decisions in its Draft Climate Change Bill.

And then we still have M Bovis threatening many farm businesses and a man called Adrian Orr in Wellington who wants to future proof further our already very profitable banking industry. Many challenges. No wonder many potential buyers are sitting outside of the market currently.

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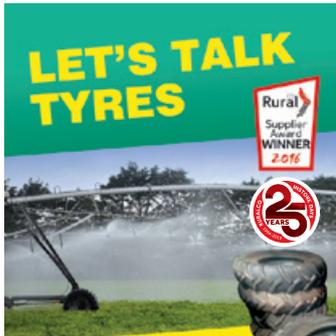


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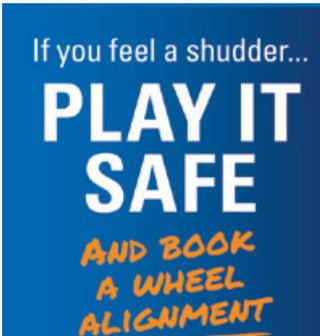
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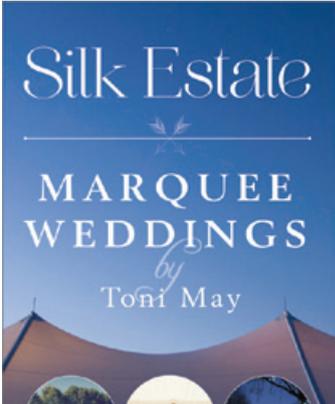
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