

JUNE / JULY 2014

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

FarmIQ to unlock
pastoral potential

Healthy employees
are productive
employees

Rugby in the
heartland

Succession in
farming and
breeding

From the CEO

This edition of Real Farmer has a particularly diverse range of reading, covering all manner of topics from rugby through to a farmers cooking programme.



Combine these with the usual array of informative articles and there's sure to be something of interest for everyone in your household.

One of our feature stories takes a look at the Howden family farming operation in West Otago, just north of Gore. Brian and Nola, along with their son Nathan and his wife Charlotte have bred Texel and other composite rams since 2005, but the family's farming history stretches further back and has seen many high points along the way. Both generations talk about where they have come from and what the future holds.

We also talk to Mid Canterbury woman, Jen Sheppard who is working with Federated Farmers to provide young and migrant farmers with cooking classes, recipes and supermarket tours in an effort to improve food and nutrition knowledge, and in turn, employee productivity. Jen is passionate about food and these classes are set to benefit employees and employers alike.

There's also a profile on the Heartland Rugby competition; its history since it was borne out of the old NPC in 2006 and its importance in our regions today.

Economic commentator, Tony Alexander shares his views on where the NZ dollar is heading as the world economy moves on from the turbulent times of 2008 and 2009; there's also a look at the Farm IQ system of technologies created to provide a consumer driven, integrated value chain for red meat; and Ramsay Margolis discusses the importance of strong connections between co-operatives and its members.

Winter is here and as we fast approach the shortest day, I hope you'll take some time to settle down by the fire and read through this edition of Real Farmer.

Neal Shaw, Group Chief Executive

Upcoming Events

11–14 June
Mystery Creek Fieldays

Farm Safety Training
17 June—Ashburton
22 July—Ashburton

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Unique Solutions on 03 423 2273 or email cindy@uniquesolutions.co.nz.

Primary ITO Train the Trainer Workshops

11 June—Timaru
17 June—Glenavy

For more information on this free workshop, please contact your local Primary ITO adviser on 0800 20 20 20 or email info@agservices.co.nz.

4–5 July
West Coast AgFest

Ruralco will be attending AgFest, we're looking forward to seeing you there.

10 July
Lincoln University Dairy Farm Focus Day

For more information phone 03 423 0022 or email office@siddc.org.nz.



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FRONT PAGE PHOTO:

Brian Howden with son Nathan on the family farm

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Succession in farming and breeding

Are the next generation of the Howden clan going to produce better sheep in West Otago? If they keep up their formula combining genetics, land and stock management, the odds are they will.

BY TIM BREWSTER

The Waikoikoi family is in their fourth generation of farming sheep on their Donald Road property and over the decades have consistently raised the standard of their breeding stock to ensure a successful, ongoing stud operation.

Brian and his wife Nola have been farming the property since 1981, after Brian's father left the property. A former truck-driver, an activity he still has a passion for, Brian was asked to come aboard the company that had been formed for the farm which has now been in the family for 80 years.

But it's not just the successful continuation of their stock they've been working on, family succession planning for the farm is key as well.

Brian and Nola's son Nathan and his wife Charlotte joined forces in 2008 and with the expansion of the farming operation; the combination of family co-operation and consistent stock improvement appears to be a winning formula.

"We need to be one step ahead with the fertility programme. Knowing what they (purchasers) want in the future and trying to have it available. You never know if you're getting the same client back the year after, but we've been pretty lucky, most of them have," Brian said.

Since getting back on the land, he and Nola have experienced substantial success in their farming, winning Romney Farmer of the Year and being runners-up in the AC Cameron South Island Farmer of the Year in 1991 and Clutha Farmer of the Year in 1995. In 2005, they were runners up in the Lincoln University Lamb Producer/Finisher Awards and both have undertaken judging roles for hogget competitions at district and national levels.

Long time Romney farmers, the Howden's attention had been drawn to the Texel breed which had been introduced in the early 1990's. Early adopters of the breed in New Zealand praised their resilience and strong growth rates and Brian and Nola started breeding Texel's along with their other rams after buying the MEBA Texel Stud from Errol Holgate in 2005.

In 2008 they sold their first crop of two-tooth rams. Following Nathan's return the same year the decision was made to make a bigger commitment to the breed.

"Probably my pushing it when I came back. They run off the smell of an oily rag," Nathan said.

Other attributes were their ability to maintain condition during lean times, a high confirmation rate and their high quality meat, he said.

The Texels were bred with the existing Romneys with good results.

"They went that well, all our commercial stock is now half Texel and half Romney. We were doing very well out of them [Romneys]. It's pretty hard to change sometimes but we gave it a go and it's working pretty well. I was a Romney man through and through, a former Romney Farmer of the Year. To keep it simple we had to do all or none," Brian said.

The return of Nathan also coincided with the opportunity to expand an already successful operation.

The Howden's bought the Blythburn Genetex stud from the Wishart family in 2009 and an additional 121 nearby hectares to bring the farm's total working size up to 387 hectares.

Last year the farm produced 142,755kgs of meat with an 18.5kg average lamb weight for a yield of 368kgs of meat /hectare along with 30,000kg of wool.

With an estimated 30% of their work allocated to the stud, the Howden's sell between 100 to 110 two-tooth rams a year and between 30 and 35 Genetex (Romney and Texel) ram lambs.

The stud stock units this year totalled 600 stud ewes, 180 stud hoggets and 160 stud ram hoggets.

"The combination of family co-operation and consistent stock improvement appears to be a winning formula."



ABOVE: Nathan and Brian Howden
OPPOSITE PAGE: The sheep that are the farms backbone

"All stock are treated the same, when our studs leave our gate we want them to maintain their condition. It's a false economy fattening the studs for view on our premises, only for them to go backward once they have left," Nathan said.

Of the 3,720 commercial ewes this year, 24% were allocated to the 'B' mob and all their offspring are sent to the works.

"The B mob are still good sheep but we're not going to breed from them because they've got faults."

"They're pretty hard cullers," Nola says of her husband and son. Strong quality control for stock

and their stud is a crucial aspect of their success, Brian said.

The reputation of the stud and the commercial stock has been a big factor in securing a valuable supply contract with the Waitrose supermarket chain in the UK, a contract the Howden's have had for 15 years.

The security of the contract enables them to buy additional stock when numbers drop and helps with their reputation to potential purchasers.

"We just seem to have people coming to buy our rams. Word of mouth is the best advertising.

One of the problems in ram breeding is you struggle to find better rams than yours," Brian said. Managing customer expectations with breeding stock can also be a bit tricky.

"Some people will change their ram breed and expect changes overnight but it takes five generations," Nola said.

Brian and Nola are equal shareholders with Nathan and Charlotte who now have two small children, which means a good working relationship is vital.

"We seem to work very well. We have a policy where we talk on Sunday nights. We see each other most days. We plan our week. We have goals and objectives that have to be met and we know what has to be done for the rest of the week. We don't get up in the morning and wonder what we are going to do," Brian said.

"Best bit probably was I didn't come home straight away and learnt from other people as well. I didn't get set in Dad's ways," Nathan said.

After completing a diploma in Farm Management at Lincoln University in 2002, Nathan worked on a sheep, beef and cropping farm in Mid Canterbury. That was followed by a stint playing rugby and working on a high country sheep farm in Wales.

Following his return, he notes the changes in the area due to dairy farming has brought financial benefits to the area, but the traditionally tight-knit social values of the area have suffered.

"I think the community's probably not as close as it used to be. There's a lot more turnover. I don't think it's their fault completely. It's just that they're only around two, three or four years."

Like most parts of rural New Zealand, farming families traditionally have always been strongly involved in their local community. Brian is a Life Member of the local cricket club, chairman of the Cemetery board, committee member on the local Hall Board and Domain Board and a member of the Glenkenich Area Waterboard. Nathan is now chair of the cricket club and also helps Brian with his numerous duties.

Both men take part in a local discussion groups and are committee members of the West Otago Beef and Lamb Monitor Farm Programme.

Nola is strongly involved in the Women's Lion's Club in Gore as well as cooking at a rest home there. Charlotte is kept busy juggling a seven-month old and a three year-old, while working as a Landscape Architect for her own private



ABOVE: Nola and Brian Howden
 BELOW: The beautiful landscape of the Howden farm

practise, and acts as both the treasurer and secretary for the Waikoikoi Playgroup. "It's extremely important to be involved in the community, more so now, with the increased number of dairy farms being developed around us, and the transient nature of the industry. It means that our involvement, plus that of

the other permanent locals ensures that the community still operates at its best," Nathan said. As a former member of the school trustees when Nathan was growing up, Brian notices he is no longer so aware of what's going on in the area. "Once your children leave school you lose touch with the district." Apart from the increase in the dairying industry, some of the biggest changes he has noticed during his tenure since the 1980's has been the

amount of information for stock management. "Genetics has changed and availability of information. So many things you can blood test for. Electric fencing and break feeding is unreal. Scanning is a terrific tool. You can feed your stock accordingly. Ram harnesses are very important for managing feed, you put them out for a certain period of time and draft that colour off." Being able to measure pasture cover accurately for feed budgeting as a result has been a big improvement, especially at lambing time. Costs for supplies and services have risen, but things are still better than the early days, Brian said. "When I started farming interest rates were 21% and we paid back 2% of principle on top of it. People say it's hard today, the figures are bigger but I reckon things were harder then. What we were getting for our produce wasn't much.

"Being able to measure pasture cover accurately for feed budgeting as a result has been a big improvement, especially at lambing time."

The future is looking strong for the operation with plans for increased stock numbers and some cattle. The farm is well set up for cattle with plans for some bulls, plus growing whole crop of barley for a nearby dairy farmer Nathan said.

"The set up is pretty good. We're trying to have a bit more diversification rather than all our eggs in one basket."

An ongoing part of their improvement is to increase the survival rate between scanning and tailing. This year they had a scanning success of 190% with 153% survival rate and would like to reduce the 16-17% difference down to 12%. Weather events and illnesses such as Salmonella Brandenburg can also affect mortality rates.

One of their more recent ventures is dabbling with the new breed on the block, Charollais. Early results have shown superior growth rates up to 5kg better than the other lambs on the property so this year they will be offering half Texel and half Charollais two-tooth rams for sale.





Despite the big changes in the area, the Howden's are intent on staying with their sheep farming as the benefits outweigh the other options. Nathan says, "being able to work with family, being able to breed new breeds (Texel and Charollais), trying different things within breeds [such as] crossing different breeds and playing with the percentage composition in each breed, to see which works best. Watching the stock develop over the years such as hoggets progressing through to two-tooth and on into mixed aged ewes, meeting new farmers or ram buyers, seeing how they run their operation.

"Despite the big changes in the area, the Howden's are intent on staying with their sheep farming as the benefits outweigh the other options."

We are always looking for new ideas [and its good] seeing the same buyers coming back year after year."

He says a big attraction is the lifestyle. "It's not the same thing every day, you're always trying to improve from year to year such as scanning and lambing percentages, weaning drafts and lamb weights, and you really can't beat a beautiful day out on the lambing beat. Texel is still going to play an extremely important role in the sheep industry, due to its high meat yield, confirmation and fertility."

ABOVE: The three generations of Howdens from left Brian and Nola, their son Nathan with his wife Charlotte and their children

But the challenges are there as well, "trying to be one step ahead of the purchasers, and trying to source sires, better than what we have ourselves. Try to keep improving the breed while seeing the numbers of purchases decline as they head into other industries such as dairy, dairy support and cropping."

Information from the NZ and Australian Sheepbreeders associations

Texel sheep were reported to have been on the North Sea coast of Europe for many centuries. The breed takes its name from the Isle of Texel in the Province of North Holland.

They were selected from Denmark and Finland to suit New Zealand and Australian conditions. In addition to their natural attributes of heavy muscling and leanness, they had to be mobile sheep capable of travelling distances, free lambing and easy care. A select Australian flock began quarantine in New Zealand in 1988 and an objective genetic selection program was implemented.

The Texels imported into New Zealand were sourced from Denmark and Finland because of their scrapie-free status. They were released from quarantine in 1990.

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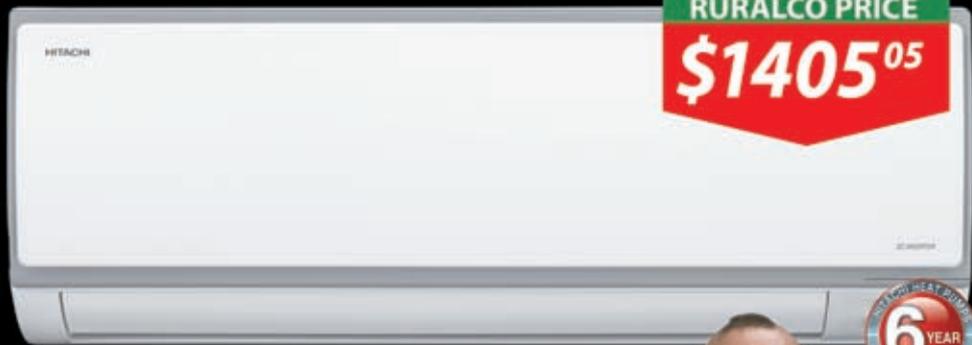
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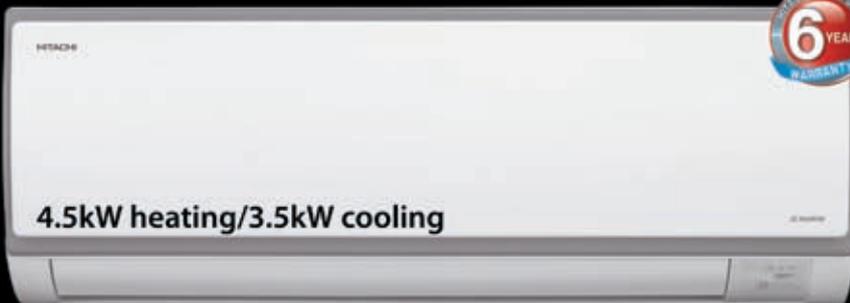
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Taking responsibility a fading strength

Visitors to Canterbury who understand agriculture often enviously tell us about the “bubble” the region farms in, thanks in part to good soils, but largely due to the ability to irrigate efficiently and regularly. NEAL SHAW, GROUP CEO

That combination means we are reaping the full benefits of strong commodity prices without the debilitating effects of drought that have afflicted some of our northern counterparts for two consecutive years.

But despite the awesome opportunities the region offers anyone with an inclination to take some risk and work hard, it is dumbfounding at times to see and hear of the wasted potential that floats on the edges of such a promising period in the region's economic history.

I recently had the unpleasant experience of having to sit through a court case for a teenager charged with burgling local homes. Little can be written about the case that was heard in the Ashburton District Court, with strict suppression around the individual's identity, and the exact nature of the burglaries.

The story that was able to be recounted in the local paper described the teen's lawyer's defence for the individual's actions.

The defence argued the individual had been pushed to the “point of emotional collapse” by bullying, and was in fact the victim in the whole saga.

Predictably the defence seemed to dodge the question about just how someone who was teetering on collapse still managed to find the wherewithal to commit six burglaries in houses.

The headline for the article on the charged teenager neatly rounded up the view increasingly taken by assorted social departments, courts, lawyers and often family members, describing the teen as the “victim”.

Little note was made of the undoubtedly stressful, fearful time the teen's victims had spent wondering if or when their home may be broken into again, and their private space uncaringly violated.

This opportunity to observe the time, effort and cost involved in processing individuals like this was sobering and saddening. On reflection it suggested there has been a major failure in this individual's life, that the excuse of being a bullying victim as explanation for their behaviour does nothing to help them acknowledge their crime, and less to get them to turn their life around.

The court experience was arguably the extreme example of complete absolution from personal responsibility. However it did highlight to me a general inability to accept responsibility for wrong doing, and do something about it, a view that permeates many of that individual's generation.

It is an inability that colours discussion with farm operators in the region as they struggle to secure

loyal, competent staff, and an inability that will threaten the region's ability to continue riding the wave of economic success enjoyed to date.

Many farm operators have shrugged their shoulders at locals' indifference to work and opportunities, and simply short circuited the recruitment process by employing overseas workers.

These are generally people who know what true hardship is, have strong family values and are prepared to lean into hard work with spirit, good humour and loyalty.

They are duly rewarded by grateful employers, and it is from their ranks the farming leaders of the future may well rise.

There is an interesting irony at play in the region right now.

As the purchase of farm land by overseas interests is questioned and sometimes lamented, we are seeing the rise of more overseas workers populate important, productive positions on the region's farms.

Perhaps more effort by local families to adopt the values these overseas workers carry naturally will deliver the generation we need, one capable of taking responsibility, working hard and reaping the rewards that will inevitably follow and are there to be had.

BELOW: Neal Shaw, Group CEO





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Check out www.ruralco.co.nz for updated locations.

*The 9¢ is the current discount as at 1 June 2014 and may be subject to change. The card cannot be used in conjunction with other fuel discount offers.



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Cows should be seen but not herd

Cows are often viewed as a mob, yet there are many benefits in focussing on the individuals within the mob. As part of the Routes to Profit workshops run by SealesWinslow, the question is asked about how each cow justifies its place in the herd.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY SEALES WINSLOW.

The chart shows an analysis of a herd of cows based on their expected 305 day yield. It shows that the bottom cows are only producing 200KgMS.

At a \$7.00 payout these animals would only be earning \$1,400 each.

Is this enough?

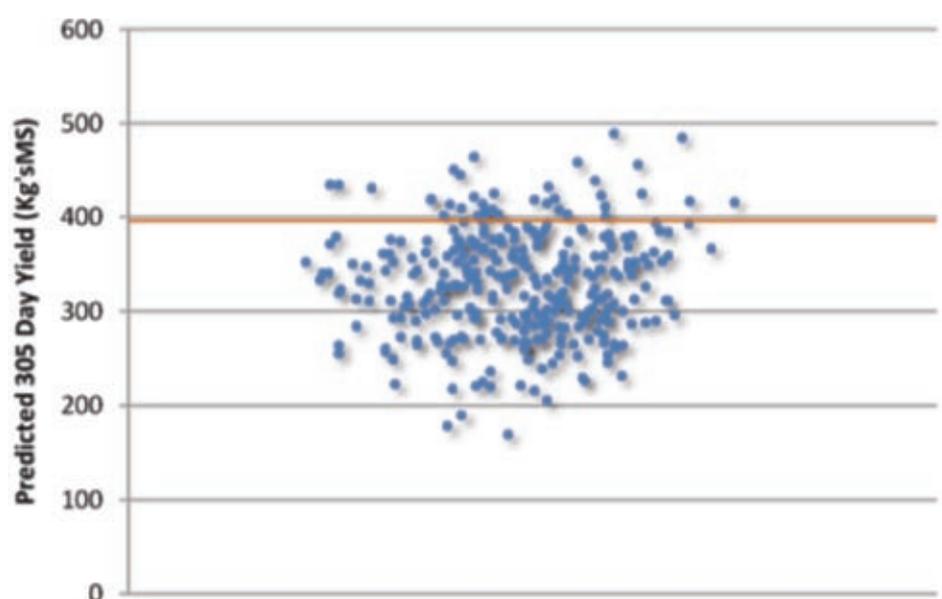
Analysis of the economic survey data indicates that by next season the average NZ dairy farm will have fixed costs (base farm costs) of around \$1,600 per head, so these animals would not even pay for the fixed costs of the business. Even worse, they will typically have variable costs of around \$800 spent on them as fertiliser, seed, sprays, shed costs, purchased feed, veterinarian and medicinal, etc, so will lose around \$1,000.

“Turning \$18,000 into feed at \$600/t would give us 30t of extra feed to put into the herd.”

If we were to cull the bottom 10 cows of this herd of 477 cows, the milk that they produced, if spread across the other cows, would only require a lift of 4.3MS per head. This equates to 0.014MS per day over the lactation length of 305 days.

The saving would be that we now have 10 less cows to feed, milk, treat, etc. If we assume that the maintainance cost of a cow including walking is 65MJ of energy, we would save 65MJ x 10 cows x 365 days = 237,250MJ of energy. In dry matter terms (assuming feed at 11.5MJ/KgDM) this is 20,630KgDM. If we then assume a cost of dry matter at 25c/KgDM the saving would be \$5,157.

There would also be the cash from the sale of these 10 animals. If they sell for \$1,800 each we now have \$18,000 of working capital. Turning \$18,000 into feed at \$600/t would give us 30t of extra feed to put into the herd. If we choose the right feed, we will drive dry matter intake and get very little, if any, substitution. Even assuming a 20% loss/substitution, the feed should produce an



extra 4,615MS which, at a \$7.00 payout, is worth \$32,307. This is pretty much a 2:1 return on the investment!

So challenge your herd and see the individuals and the contribution that they make.

SealesWinslow can assist with this process. Contact us on 0800 007 766 for an on-farm visit.

 **SealesWinslow**

The range of SealesWinslow nutritional products are available through ATS and Ruralco.

FarmIQ to unlock pastoral potential

Somewhere deep in southern hill country a farmer curses under his breath as he examines the in-calf rates for a mob of breeding cows. **BY RICHARD RENNIE**

Poor results for one particular mob leave him concerned and frustrated – he can see no apparent reason for the poor outcome compared to the rest of the herd, but has little reference to how each animal within that mob has done in the past to know who the main offenders are in that particular mob. Later that same evening at a restaurant in a provincial town a diner is also experiencing a sense of frustration.

The steak she ordered has failed to deliver as an eating experience, and she is wishing she had chosen the chicken. Despite its delectable appearance, she has had to fight through a tough cut with little flavour that the waiter's best efforts could never redress.

Her sense of dissatisfaction will be recounted several times to friends, posted on her Facebook site and referred to in a bitter Twitter tweet the next day, with both beef and the restaurant slated for the experience.

They are two very different people, at opposite ends to the red meat process, but sharing very real frustrations.

However thanks to the efforts of industry, farmers and government, both may find that frustration a thing of the past as the FarmIQ project pushes on with the goal of integrating and improving the red meat experience from farmer to consumer.

The programme is one of the longest standing Primary Growth Partnerships (PGPs), established four years ago.

The PGPs aim to increase the level of private sector investment in innovative research; given NZ has one of the lowest levels

of sector Research and Development of any OECD country. They rely upon private and public sector financing with strict accountability and performance targets set and reviewed regularly by an overseeing board.

The FarmIQ programme was born in 2010 as a seven year partnership between Silver Fern Farms, Tru Test, Landcorp and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

The government and commercial interests placed total funding of \$150 million into five key projects that truly represent a "paddock to plate" approach to lifting the red meat sector's productivity, and profitability.

Those key projects encompass market research and product development, processing feedback, farm performance, genetics, IT and Farm Management Systems.

Four years into the project and results are already starting to roll into both the farmer producer "back end" of the sector, and into the aisles of supermarkets around the country and the world.

Over 100 farmers are involved in helping develop the Farm Management System due for commercial release later this year. With it comes the ability for farmers to unlock the wealth of information previously held within separate sources of the farm business.

The Farm Management System offers a cloud accessed "information hub" for sheep, beef and deer farmers, with complete integration of genetics, yields, fertiliser history, and farm mapping to enable them to make more informed decisions on farm.

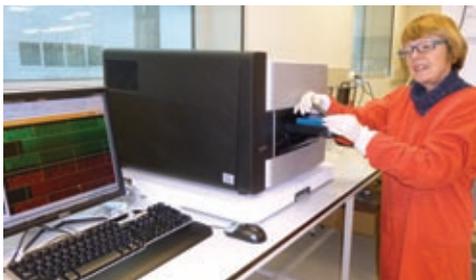




At the consumer end of the red meat chain, the results of the most intensive level of research ever undertaken on consumers' red meat eating experiences has delivered a new beef grading system.

Launched in March by Silver Fern Farms the Eating Quality Master Grading System was based on consumers in the United States and New Zealand sampling 96,000 portions of beef then a team of experts developing a system that defined the "ideal" beef cut, based on tenderness, juiciness and flavour.

Meantime, in between the chiller aisle in the supermarket and core information sources on farm, the FarmIQ programme has also been working on developing cutting edge genetics technology in the form of a high density SNP chip. This is capable of detecting genetic markers that can be used as predictors by ram breeders for heritable traits directly related to carcass yield and meat quality.



FarmIQ CEO Collier Isaacs points to the programme bringing these disparate parts of the chain closer together, with information from each fed back to farmers.

"Farmers are starting to receive the information they require to produce animals that meet consumer preferences, and for this they will receive payments based on meat quality. They are also getting a tool that helps them drive farm productivity.

"Consumers will be offered premium-branded red meat that consistently meets their eating quality preferences. And the processing industry will begin to build approaches and relationships based on delivering value."

FarmIQ brings that frustrated beef farmer with poor calving performance some answers by being able to link in different information sources of his business, while the unhappy diner may ultimately only have the chef to blame, rather than the steak.

FarmIQ shines light on farm performance

When Ruralco Cardholders Duncan and Tina Mackintosh of Whiterock Mains at Rangiora started on the FarmIQ programme four-years ago their first step was to "measure, measure, measure".

The couple knew that to improve their business they needed to have some benchmarks for comparison, and needed to measure key areas to understand what improvements were needed.

The "base farm" data they gathered on key performance areas of fertility, growth rates and survival identified they were focussing more upon the weight gains in their sale lambs, while ewe replacement lambs were tending to miss out.

"We found we were doing well to weaning with all of them, but after that we were not getting ewe replacements up to weight. We were not getting the lambs into their bellies so scanning percentages were not what they could be," Duncan says.

Now with the ewe flock electronically tagged, weight gain monitoring is possible and the couple can link weight levels back to targeted scanning percentages, a key benchmark they now review regularly.

Studying the three years data collected earlier they found a relationship between weight and scanning, and determined they needed a 46kg ewe hogget pre-mating to achieve their 120% scanning target they set. With regular weighing at key periods they also now have data on daily growth rates.

"So it becomes a case of working backwards to weaning now, and calculating how much feed we need to achieve that." This year they achieved 45.8kg against the 46kg target, against previous years' averages of 39-42kg.

Duncan says the FarmIQ programme has helped him and Tina focus far more closely in a controlled way on their farm's performance, and also made the business more interesting and challenging.

"There is nowhere to hide, you have the numbers and the data, and you are forced to review and really look hard at your performance."

Further south in eastern Otago near Waikouaiti Ruralco Cardholders Rob and Kirsty Lawson are using their involvement as a FarmIQ farm to pick some of what Rob calls the "low hanging fruit" of profitability opportunities on the 2300ha property.

"Initially for us FarmIQ has been to get a better process in place for doing the basics right, and moving to a more technical level from there."

A key performance indicator they have worked on with FarmIQ has been lamb growth rate performance from docking to finishing. Going a step further in analysis, they found the terminal

sired lambs they aim to quit early and feed on the better part of the farm were diverging significantly in weight from their lambs run on the rougher tussock country.

"We were seeing a 5-7kg weaning weight difference when adjusted to 90 days, and asked 'what can we do to get that group on the tussock to catch up?'"



Regular FarmIQ dry matter monitoring indicated the quality flats on the farm were also generating considerable surpluses, just as the tussock fed lamb growth rates were flat lining.

"So we made the decision to wean twin lambing ewes earlier onto that better country to capture that surplus, and lift lamb weights quicker."

They have also moved to carry more two-year old cattle through to help maintain pasture quality and on-going growth on that part of the farm for longer. Other monitoring work on growth rates in plantain-chicory swards is also providing valuable insights to future cropping options for summer.

Rob agrees the FarmIQ involvement is as much about a culture of improving and growing as it is about monitoring and measuring.

"It's about running the business better. The beauty is farmers can choose to take out of it what they need. We aren't looking for the most technical system, but getting those basics right and moving up from there."

ABOVE LEFT: Duncan and Tina Mackintosh, with FarmIQ Business Manager Jansen Travis

LEFT: Researcher Di Hyndman of AgResearch Invermay holds a new high-density SNPchip, in front of a monitor showing a read-out

ABOVE: Monthly cutting from this cage in a crop of plantain, clover and chicory will help calibrate a computer-based growth forecasting tool

BELOW: IQ farmers Shelley Dew-Hopkins (left) and Ian Hopkins (right) of Rangiwahia, get a demonstration from Silver Fern Farms graders Nina and Anne





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Thoughts from across the rivers

When I got into my car at the airport I noticed a card on the seat from the parking people. It included the remark v. dirty.

BY ELE LUDEMANN

I couldn't deny that the car was carrying the layers of dust which gather when you regularly drive on unsealed roads, but "v.dirty" seemed to be an unnecessary and urban response to rural reality.

It wasn't the first time I'd come across this rural-urban divide over the state of my car.

Some years ago when I stopped for fuel the petrol station attendant said, "You from the country?"

I followed his eyes from the mud-encrusted tyres, up the dusty sides to the number eight wire which did duty as a radio aerial and grinned weakly. I'd meant to wash the car before I left home just as I always meant to give it the regular valet service it undoubtedly deserved. But regular seldom translated into frequent and who would notice if it did when I lived on an unsealed road?

When it was dry the cleanest car was dusty again by the time it was driven the first 100 metres from our cattle stop, and if it was wet the sides would be splattered with mud before I've even made it to the gate.

I don't have that excuse now because the

road is sealed to our gate in the direction I drive most often and we bit the bullet and sealed our own drive.

However, there are still unsealed roads around us and almost every time I go out I have to use at least one of them.

"I followed his eyes from the mud-encrusted tyres, up the dusty sides to the number eight wire which did duty as a radio aerial and grinned weakly."

When we were first married, the car often doubled as a farm vehicle. Thankfully these days my car is my own and rarely, if ever, has to do duty on the farm.

The ute is another matter. Not only does it almost always carry the dust and dirt which goes with on-farm driving on the outside, a fair bit of muck makes it way inside on the clothes and boots of the driver and passengers.

None of this matters when the vehicle is used solely for farm work and the driver is dressed

appropriately. But it can leave those using it for other tasks decidedly the worse for the encounter. I gathered graphic evidence of that when I took the truck to town and arrived with a broad and dirty stripe where my once white blouse had met the seat belt.

The proliferation of four-wheel drive vehicles these days make it less easy to differentiate between town and country cars, although the best of the latter are usually still somewhat dirtier than the former.

In a discussion on this I discovered that people who park the cars at airports have to check for scratches before they drive. The "v. dirty" wasn't a criticism but an observation there was too much dust to see the paintwork.

Even so, next time I went I washed the car en route so I could be sure it was "v. clean".

Ele Ludemann
homepaddock.wordpress.com



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Charging your batteries

Petrol stations of today will become charging stations of tomorrow when batteries help power cars and vehicles of the future, says third-generation Ashburton battery shop owner Robert Newlands. BY LINDA CLARKE

Robert's grandfather Bill Newlands established the battery and auto-electrical store Newlands in Ashburton in 1934 and the 80 years since have seen some big technological advances.

Robert says the future is exciting, with the development of hybrid cars which run on power supplied by a battery and petrol. Vehicle batteries as we know them will change dramatically.

Change has been a constant in the industry. In the early years, just five per cent of a vehicle involved electrics or wiring; now it's 25 per cent with computer technology running brakes, airbags, fuel efficiency, transmission and stability control, and motor performance.

Batteries are being developed fit for purpose, be it for mopeds, massive trucks, marine or motorbikes. Ten years ago, there were around 50 different types, Newlands now stocks over 170.

It can be confusing, but the experienced staff at Newlands' three stores—in Ashburton, Rolleston and now Timaru—are among the best in the business when it comes to diagnosing battery or auto-electrical ailments.

The company has recently bought the Timaru Battery Shop (Timaru Battery Services) and Robert says it is a natural fit for Newlands and will continue to supply batteries for all types of business or individuals with the three full-time staff there able to call on the experience of long-serving staff at Ashburton and Rolleston.

He said the apprentices and qualified technicians in all three shops were actively involved in ongoing battery training and able to advise on the right product for the right application. Picking the wrong battery can have dire consequences.

"If someone puts in a battery that is too light for the application or the wrong battery, it can severely affect the starting performance and the operation of the vehicle's electronic systems, and because many modern vehicles are more electronic, that leads to problems with the vehicle.

"It will be slow to start and that will cause excess wear on the starter motor, and the battery will fail earlier."

Some new generation vehicles sport stop-start technology, something once confined to hybrid cars but now spreading to conventional vehicles. Stop-start systems help save fuel by shutting the engine off when the vehicle is at rest, coasting or slowing down—a stop at a red light will cause the engine to cut off, once the light turns green and the driver applies pressure to the accelerator, the engine will switch on again.

The battery is an important part of this system, and designed for a vehicle stopping around 18,000 times a year.

Newlands is a proud agent for Century Batteries, an Australian-Japanese company that has been around almost as long as it has. The company makes batteries better suited to Australia and New Zealand's weather conditions.

Robert said batteries were often a grudge purchase—"you know you have to have one"—but the right choice was easy with good advice.



TOP: Rolleston Branch
MIDDLE: Ashburton Branch
ABOVE: Timaru Battery Service

Newlands turns 80 in July and the company plans to celebrate with a month of special deals and special events. Robert's father John, who retired in 2000, and long-serving staff will be central to celebrations.

The company is a long-standing Ruralco Supplier, having been signed up with ATS, and now Ruralco, for about 35 years.

Robert said expanding to Rolleston four years ago had also been a good move for the business, with agricultural, commercial and urban growth in the Selwyn area.

The three locations also give Ruralco Cardholders plenty of choice.



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Where to from here?

The rural community was affected like everyone else when the world economy took a tumble over 2008–09 and commodity prices fell away. BY TONY ALEXANDER, BNZ CHIEF ECONOMIST

For a period of time there was strong insulation for farmers from those price declines delivered by the NZ dollar falling away. But in the second half of 2009 as global worries dissipated, our currency rose strongly and with fits and starts some of our commodity prices have also risen - or soared for a while in the case of dairy products.

Where to from here for the NZ dollar? One popular argument is that a lot of good news is already factored into the NZD so the risk from here is that we lose ground. In addition, conditions are looking better in the United Kingdom and United States and in the latter the Federal Reserve has started to withdraw its extraordinary monetary stimulus. That withdrawal has the effect of delivering some extra support to the USD.

However, farmers, other exporters and investors should be wary that they don't start anticipating a large currency decline too soon. First up it pays to note that as a rule, the NZD only falls sharply when our trading partner growth rates plummet and that is not on the cards. Having said that, were war to break out in Europe or between China and Japan the situation could change sharply for the worse.

Secondly, NZ monetary policy is being tightened as our central bank justifiably sees little need for depression-fighting levels of interest rates

when our GDP growth rate will soon exceed 4%. Again, as a rule of thumb, the NZD tends to rise when our monetary policy is being tightened. That tightening process may extend into 2017 though before then and maybe even next year, policies are likely to be tightened also in many other countries. NZ is simply first cab off the rank in this process.

Third, casual observers may not know it, but the carry trade involving borrowing in low interest rate countries like Japan and investing in NZ and Australia has been largely inactive these past few years. But now that NZ is offering steadily improving returns there is a risk this currency-driving behaviour resurfaces and the NZD and AUD receive fresh boosts.

None of these factors allow us to state with any firm degree of certainty where exactly the NZD is headed on average, let alone on a particular cross rate. But they do suggest that while one day the NZD will correct back downward, it may not happen until monetary policy in NZ starts easing.

When might borrowers face that situation? It is impossible to say at this stage. Most of us forecasters feel reasonably confident saying that interest rates will rise about another 2% from their current levels and perhaps peak in late-2016 or 2017. But we really don't know how people will behave in the post-GFC environment as

borrowing costs go up. The next few years of tightening monetary policies around the world will be hugely experimental and central bankers overseas will be watching developments in our economy with intense interest.

Given the huge uncertainty surrounding interest rate movements one has to admit to huge uncertainty also surrounding exchange rate moves. Acknowledging both of these, this then implies that borrowers should look to hedge the many risks with a good spread of floating, short-term and medium to long-term fixed interest rates. Exporters may want to take advantage of occasional bouts of currency weakness to boost their hedging. As for investors, the huge uncertainties mean a high probability of volatility in equity markets, but slowly improving returns for those of conservative nature who favour bank term deposits.

This editorial comment is written by Tony Alexander. The views expressed are my own and do not purport to represent the views of the BNZ.

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\$10 million upgrade to deliver feed when needed

Farmers purchasing animal nutrients from SealesWinslow will have better access to feed at times of peak demand, with a \$10 million upgrade underway to increase production at its manufacturing facilities.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY SEALES WINSLOW

One year on from becoming a wholly-owned subsidiary of farm nutrient co-operative Ballance Agri-Nutrients, SealesWinslow is making significant investments in its service and manufacturing capabilities to better meet the needs of its customers.

"Feed plays a significant role in farm profitability and animal health at key times of the year, particularly around calving and in summer when pasture growth slows right down, so continuity of supply is critical," says General Manager of Animal Nutrition, Graeme Smith.

"It can be a challenge to deliver on orders fast enough during peak seasons, and we are really looking to up our game to make sure we have product for all of our customers where and when they need it."

Mr Smith said that in the feed market it is important to get the balance right between fresh, quality feed, and building enough inventory to cater for spikes in demand.

"We need to make more, make it better, and make it faster, as well as make provisions for smarter storage and distribution solutions.

Farmers already have access to the product through ATS (Ashburton Trading Society) stores, and SealesWinslow is also looking at ways to utilise select Ballance service centres as distribution hubs to provide greater access for customers to pick up bagged product.

Mr Smith said that the project—flagged for completion before the coming spring season—will have a significant impact on SealesWinslow's ability to manufacture and deliver a comprehensive range of stock feeds, with a strong focus on product quality and manufacturing capacity to ensure best product, best delivery.

While the company is focusing on getting the back end of the business in order, they are also giving just as much attention to the front end to increase the availability of on farm services which are supported with specialist animal nutrition and complete farm nutrient management advice.

Two new field consultants in Northland and North Otago will join the current team of twelve, and the specialist animal nutrition science extension arm of the business will be aligned with the core Ballance science extension team, adding additional science extension officers in both the North and South Islands. An animal nutrition science manager role has been added, which will focus on working with the market to demonstrate the economic benefits of the strategic use of animal feed.

ABOVE: SealesWinslow National Distribution Manager Richard Doherty overseeing the demolitions at Morrinsville to make way for the upgrade

SealesWinslow is a supplier to ATS Retail so you can purchase any of the range of their animal nutrition products through your Ruralco Card today by contacting ATS on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).



What's planned for the Ashburton mill upgrade?

New textured feed (muesli) production plant for Ashburton to extend capacity to deliver a range of compounded muesli-style feeds

Improved production capacity in Ashburton to enhance ability to delivery dry pellet compound feeds

An upgrade to the Ashburton molasses block plant to improve production capacity and product quality

Increased bagging capacity at Ashburton including the introduction of robotic stackers to speed the process and reduce heavy lifting hazard for employees

Integration and enhancement of the information systems to improve and enhance business process such as order tracking and production planning

Enhancements to the manufacturing plant process control systems which enable better process control and improved product quality assurance.



New life injected into Coalgate sales

Early May was the annual Coalgate High Country Calf Sale, and also marked a five year milestone for what has become a vibrant part of the Canterbury community.

BY RICHARD RENNIE

The Canterbury Central Sale Yards at Coalgate also provide regular Thursday sheep and cattle sales, offering not only a welcome sales option for farmers across the region, but a social venue to exchange the latest news in the industry and catch up with colleagues and friends.

The yards jointly owned and operated by Hazlett Rural and Peter Walsh & Associates have come a long way from the decrepit overgrown site they once were.

Their use had fallen well into decline after being open for over a century, with only occasional cattle sales, and sheep yards into almost total disuse.

This was until the two sales companies saw the opportunity to offer farmers an alternative to selling stock at the established yards in Christchurch.

HRL General Manager Ed Marfell recalls how the yards were progressively transformed into a usable, robust venue, and how quickly the region picked up on the value of having some centrally located sales facilities.

"We had our first sale in April 2009, a cattle sale and another followed a month later. The pressure came to ramp up the sales and the cattle were quickly followed by sheep in August that year. Before long we were into fortnightly sales, then of course the weekly format we run now."

While dairying has been the "rock star" sector for Canterbury's agricultural growth in recent years, Ed says it has been highly encouraging to see the support sheep and beef farmers have injected into the yards' success.

Now every Thursday marks sale day at Coalgate, and with it a valuable economic injection to a town of only 270 people. The yard's tuck shop has provided a valuable fund raising outlet for



ABOVE: Angus weaners yarded at the Coalgate Sale
BELOW: Line up of buyers at the Coalgate Sale

two local primary schools, and two locals are employed fulltime with the yards.

"And Hororata Engineering have secured good work on repairs and maintenance here most weeks. The level of community spirit and support that has gone into the place is quite something."

The yards themselves are part of Canterbury history, first established and opened by one of Canterbury's founding run-holders and politicians, John Hall. Hall was as much a pastoralist as politician and saw the value of having yards established in a location that represents something of a cross roads for the region.

"The geography works well for the yards. They sit on the edge of Coalgate, with the Waimak' gorge

and stock from North Canterbury coming through and to the south stock come through from the Rakaia gorge and the rest of Canterbury."

Ed says it is also helped by earning excellent support from the region's transport companies offering timely stock delivery.

The numbers of sheep and cattle going through the yards have been moving steadily upwards, with around 4,000 sheep and 350 cattle selling each week. The calf sale recorded good yardings of 1,150 quality high country station calves.

The success has been helped by taking a customer focussed approach to the yards and selling through them. All cattle are weighed and scanned prior to auction and a catalogue is produced and loaded up on the website the night before.

Ed says a look at the success of the Temuka sale yards gives some possibilities of where Coalgate could head in the future.

"The Central Plains scheme will really change the land around here, and you look at the dairy content in the Temuka yards now. Coalgate sits in an ideal location to take advantage of any opportunities that come from that growth in dairy."



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Getting the basics right

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.

IAN HODGE, VETENT RIVERSIDE AND PUREMILK MASTITIS CONSULTANCY

Many investments go in to establishing a pregnancy and leading it to a successful completion, so taking some time now to plan the upcoming season will be time well spent.

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 in to the heifer's lactation and the return on investment for doing this can be significant.

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 subclinical 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 much better than cure in this department. If you have proven preventative 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 preferential 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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Healthy employees are productive employees

Healthy employees are productive employees—one of the reasons behind special cooking classes at Jen's Kitchen. BY KATE TAYLOR

Ashburton cooking school owner and Ruralco Cardholder Jen Sheppard has joined forces with Federated Farmers to provide cooking classes, recipes and supermarket tours for young and migrant farmers.

"It's a health and safety issue. If workers aren't eating properly then they're not working properly—that's the loss of a huge asset in a multi-million dollar business. Farming is physical work and employers need to make sure their workers are eating good food to prevent wasted down time with sickness or fatigue. Eating properly is extremely important and I'm showing them how easy it is."

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers Dairy Chairman Hamish Davidson says Jen is a passionate and focused person and Federated Farmers is 100% behind what she is doing.

"It's great she can make a business out of a real need in the community. She identified the need first in their own farming business and then recognised it was more widespread."

"Mid Canterbury's workforce in the dairy industry is built around international people and they have to be able to come here, live comfortably and integrate into New Zealand society (and know) how to find food and how to prepare it in

a New Zealand kitchen. We definitely support the concept from a community-need point of view. There is a need. Ten years ago international people coming in were chucked in a farmhouse in the middle of nowhere and left to sink or swim really. Now, that's not okay. We need to help them to become part of the community."

Jen is working with a few different nationalities such as Irish, Danish, Chilean and Filipino. Many of them are simply not used to what is grown or made in New Zealand.

"We show them about the different cuts of meat and identify the range of meat available to us from



the cheaper mince options through to higher-end fillets. Seasonal fruit and vegetables is another issue—making people aware of what's out there in the seasons to go with what they can cook.”

“Jen is working with a few different nationalities such as Irish, Danish, Chilean and Filipino. Many of them are simply not used to what is grown or made in New Zealand.”

As well as her own classes, Jen recently travelled to Te Awamutu in the North Island to cook for a group via the Young Farmers “pay it forward” Facebook page. There is now also a South Island version of the page.

“We enjoyed cooking with these guys. We made pasta bake, curried sausages, lasagne—it was quite



easy, which surprised them, as well as how filling they were. We also talked about making them last more than one meal and what to do with leftovers.”

“Some of these guys had a basic cooking knowledge, but it was really more about hands on showing them how to do this.”

The basic crock pot is a great asset for these people. “Most of them usually opted for having takeaways or a one-stop-shop like a pie. We talked about taking another step. Rather than just buying the pies, cook up potatoes and vegetables to go with it to make it more substantial. They seemed to really appreciate it, although at times it was almost like a comedy, some of them were hilarious.”

“Some of these guys had a basic cooking knowledge, but it was really more about hands on showing them how to do this.”

Certainly with the learning curve of many new immigrant farm workers—the teaching doesn't stop at the kitchen.

“With the involvement of Ruralco Suppliers such as ATS, we're trying to encourage buying some of the bulk products they have. Many of the immigrants are not familiar with our supermarkets and need a tour or several visits to understand what's there. It's good to have recipes with pictures of what the products look like, such as a tin of peaches or tomato sauce, so they know what they're looking for, so it looks a bit familiar to them.”

A former hairdresser, Jen's training and early working career was in Christchurch but she has returned to live and work in Ashburton where she grew up on a farm.

“I was always interested in food. I don't have a degree or anything—I'm a home cook who loves

to eat home food. I love making people aware of food. . . of eating good, healthy, hearty food.

As well as kids cooking classes, her business caters for business with staff and team building and corporates.

Jen's Kitchen is also an ambassador for the Food Revolution (as made famous by the Jamie Oliver Foundation). There are three ambassadors in the North Island and two in the South Island.

“This is one of the driving factors—it's a food revolution within the farming community. Our whole industry is about producing and feeding. Together with Federated Farmers we're promoting that New Zealand does great food and making people aware we have some great produce in New Zealand to be able to use.”



The official global Food Revolution took place on May 16 with people eating healthy food around the world—including Jen's Kitchen.

“We had an open day in the kitchen. People came in to see what we're doing, to learn about the Food Revolution and we encouraged them to make their own conscious decision to eat healthy food.”

Jen's husband Richard and two children have a sheep/cropping/dairy support farm and think it's a wonderful way to bring up a family.

For Jen, utilising locally-grown produce comes naturally, as both she and Richard grew up on family farms where most of the meat was home kill and served with three vegetables.

“But I have to give Mum credit here. She was a really good cook and I learnt a lot from her. We were so lucky being brought up on the farm with a vegetable garden and the meat supply at the back door—it was so much easier to source things and so much easier to enjoy doing it all for you.”

“At the end of the day it's pretty simple stuff. It's not rocket science. It's all about just helping, encouraging and getting people to look after themselves and making sure they can cook something nutritious and enjoy what they do.”

ABOVE LEFT: Jen Sheppard
LEFT: Farmer cooking with Jen
ABOVE: Successful cooks

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From shelter belts to ornamentals

Like any farm crop, growing good trees and shrubs takes time and care. BY LINDA CLARKE

Rodney Williams of Lakeway Nursery says trees that survive our unique climates are not grown by accident, but with good preparation and post-planting care.

Rodney and wife Pam bought the Tinwald nursery 17 years ago and grow and sell trees and shrubs for all purposes, from shelter belts and dairy shed screens, to house and driveway ornamentals.

Rodney says his passion for plants began during his time as a grain and seed agent, and he and Pam have expanded the business over the years, helping people choose the right plant for the right location and purpose.

Lakeway offers free on-farm consultations to farmers wanting trees and shrubs for shelter or riparian strips, or to beautify dairy sheds or other parts of the farm.

Their point of difference is providing honest advice about what to plant and how.

Rodney says the on-farm consultation lets him see the landscape and what is needed. For example, Mid Canterbury's varied climate, with out-of-season frosts and alpine or coastal influences, and varying soils mean trees that thrive in the hills might not do so well on the coast.

"The visit lets me see what will suit their farming practice and irrigation style, and I then recommend plants to match."

Planting is only one step in the process though. Ground preparation and post-planting care have a big influence on whether the trees or shrubs will grow well. "You wouldn't plant a crop of barley in amongst cocksfoot. Cleaning up and preparing the ground

you will plant is fundamental to success. Post-planting care is also critical.

"Often people put trees in with good intentions, but get busy with other priorities and the trees don't get release-sprayed or cared for."

Weeds and hares, he says, are the two main enemies. Hares won't eat the young trees or shrubs, they just mutilate them.

Rodney says tree guards are a good option to help with both weeds and the furry four-legged pests.

Farmers are encouraged to stick to the tree care programme, which can last up to 18 months. The results are obvious.

Lakeways can provide complete establishment service, part service or provide detailed care instructions for the DIYer.

"Plants are no different than any other crop and we provide husbandry advice and information tailored to suit."

The nursery grows both container and bare-rooted trees and shrubs. Bare-rooted deciduous trees are best planted in the winter while container plants can be planted any time; natives prefer to be in the ground after the coldest days.

Rodney's experience with our climate and changing agricultural practices over the years means his advice can help achieve best results. While his on-farm consultations are mostly



ABOVE: Some beautiful interiors available in the nursery store

MAIN IMAGE: The many varieties of plants available

in the Canterbury region, he is happy to dispense advice over the phone or arrange visits further afield.

He said last year's big windstorms had resulted in phone calls from farmers looking for alternatives to pine and gum trees for shelter. "Pines were fine as long as they were topped or hedged, judging by that recent disaster, but sequoias and wellingtonias might be worth considering as new plantings."

Lakeway Nursery also has contact with the Bees for Trees programme, helping farmers plant trees and shrubs that support bees so vital in crop pollination.

The nursery has been supplier since 1997. Over the past seventeen years they have expanded both the farm shelter and retail business and have a large and extensive range of product.



Lakeway Nursery
100 Grahams Rd
RD 4, Ashburton

Tel 03 308 9950
lakeway.nursery@clear.net.nz



Rugby in the heartland

The Heartland Rugby Championship is aptly named. This national competition is based in New Zealand's smaller regional centres, the agricultural areas that generate the nation's wealth, and where rugby remains a core part of the social fabric. The players are amateurs and the unions field the representative teams with backing from local sponsors and teams of volunteers. **BY BERNARD CARPINTER**

It's all very different from the professional rugby that grabs the headlines, but that doesn't mean the rugby is of a low standard. Mid Canterbury Captain and 2013 Heartland player of the year Jon Dampney reckons the Heartland competition compares well with the ITM Cup for the big provinces. "The level of rugby in the Heartland competition is of a high standard and some players get selected for ITM Cup teams."

"It's very physical and teams show a lot of pride and determination to put on a great performance. You never see a scoreline where it blows away, it's always really close—anyone can knock anyone over. I reckon the standard of footy there is outstanding."

In the past, when the game was completely amateur, many of New Zealand's greatest players were farmers. Their work made them strong and fit. Farmers and other people working in the agricultural sector are still

an important part of the Heartland teams - Dampney himself is a dairy farmer.

"There are quite a few farmers in teams and a lot of guys that have a lot to do with farming" he says. "Everyone's got something to do with it."

However the agricultural connection can also pose difficulties, as South Canterbury Chairman Brent Isbister explains: "The Heartland competition happens when lambing and calving

is on. There is a group of guys who are self-employed and can't make themselves available. In earlier days they may have been available but that's the reality of the modern world."

Rugby in the Heartland is very much a community thing. "We've got generally good support in our local community," Isbister says. "We've got a good sponsorship base and we're well supported by the local rugby community, and because we're running representative teams right down into the primary

providing pathways for players, coaches and referees," Isbister says. "That's what we try to do—provide a pathway to help people get to their potential."

What does it take to be a top Heartland team? The man to ask is Jon Dampney, who plays at number eight and captained Mid-Canterbury to their first Meads Cup victory last season.

"Hard work!" is Dampney's initial answer. "We're not professionals, we've all got jobs. We want to have a

Winning the Meads Cup was especially sweet for Dampney because he had twice been in teams that lost the final. "It was awesome to win it as a team and a relief, because you don't get to play in a final very often," he says. "To win one was unreal." The 2014 Heartland season kicks off on August 23.

MAIN IMAGE: Jon Dampney playing for the 2014 New Zealand Heartland XV team

BELOW: Mid Canterbury playing South Canterbury



age groups there's a lot of parental support. "Our main and longest-running sponsor is Speights; we're very grateful for their ongoing support. Our other major sponsors are XCM, a local apparel manufacturer, and Trust Aoraki, a local charitable trust who give us significant support in running representative rugby across the grades." All of the teams in the competition are often supported by their local businesses.

Local news media give good coverage to their teams and last weekend's game is likely to be a talking point in the region—especially if the team won. Dampney: "The way we went last year there was a lot of talk around in the community and it reflected in the support we got at each game, especially at the final."

All the South Island Heartland unions except for North Otago are part-owners of the Crusaders franchise and its licence, Isbister says. "While we've had significant financial support in the past from the Crusaders, the professional game has changed quite markedly so mostly the types of support we get now are non-financial support.

"For example, we run a pre-season game for them, we use some of their player resource for promotional activities, and we tap into their academy and coaching base for support around player development and coach development. Using our franchise contacts to enhance that is valuable."

Budding stars from Heartland teams could well get signed by the Super 14 teams. "That's part of the deal; it's about player identification,

laugh and a beer at the end of the day but you've got to work hard beforehand.

"We had an experienced team that was well balanced between forwards and backs. This helped a lot with the style of rugby we wanted to play."

"We're not professionals, we've all got jobs. We want to have a laugh and a beer at the end of the day but you've got to work hard beforehand."

The final against North Otago was played in a howling nor-wester. "It was terrible. The North Otago guy did a kick-off and it went back over his head and over the dead-ball line right behind him! Considering the wind and everything, both teams put on quite a good display of footy really; the ball skills and everything were outstanding from both teams."

The Mid Canterbury team included former Chiefs player Murray Williams and former Manawatu captain Grant Polson. The team also had a new coach, Glenn Moore, who had worked with Otago and the Highlanders.

"Glenn and Grant Keenan [assistant coach] were awesome," Dampney says. "They brought a lot of the technical side in and that rubbed off on the players. We learnt so much from them and to get to where we did, we put it down to their knowledge of the game and getting it through to us. The boys really appreciated it."

History

The Heartland championship was launched in 2006 as part of a major restructuring of provincial rugby in New Zealand.

Fourteen of the biggest unions compete for the ITM Cup in the National Provincial Championship and twelve, mostly from smaller population centres, play in the Pink Batts Heartland Championship for two trophies, the Meads Cup and the Lochore Cup.

The South Island teams in the Heartland competition are Buller, based in Westport, West Coast (Greymouth), Mid Canterbury (Ashburton), South Canterbury (Timaru) and North Otago (Oamaru).

Wairarapa Bush won the first Meads Cup, which is the more prestigious of the two trophies, and since then Wanganui has been the most successful team with three wins. North Otago has taken the cup twice and in 2012 East Coast—based in the small settlement of Ruatoria—did very well to win the competition. Last year Mid-Canterbury claimed the Meads Cup and South Canterbury won the Lochore Cup.

At the start of the season the Heartland teams are divided into two pools of six, using seedings so that the two pools are of roughly equal strength. The top three teams from each pool then enter the Meads Cup group, and the bottom three go into the Lochore Cup group. After another round of three games the top four from each group enter a knock-out finals series.

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target weights, treatments and favourites offer powerful tools to benchmark animal data, manage target weight progress for multiple mobs, create compliance audits for withholding animals, or customise to every farmer's specific criteria.

DATA TRANSFER—MADE EASY

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DATA STORAGE—MADE EASY

No farm operation is too large for the XR5000 which holds up to one million records, 100 data fields and 1000 sessions. The XR5000 is ideal for data-hungry farming – breeders, finishers and commercial operations. By comparison the ID5000 will capture 2–3 data fields and store up to 250,000 records with the capability of adding fields for more information. It's ideal for graziers and farmers needing reliable and accurate weighing.

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perfect clarity even in the harshest light. An automatic sensor registers brightness switching between inside-outside modes ensuring instant readability and harnessing the sun's energy for extended battery life.

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The 5000 Series Weigh Scales are going to be on show at the 2014 ATS Instore Days in the Tru-Test site but if you cannot wait until then to hear more about or to purchase this exciting new product please visit your local ATS store or call 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).



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Appropriate storage of fuel

Do you have oil, petrol or diesel on your farm or business? Do you know how to store, handle and dispose of it safely so it does not harm your family or employees or the environment? BY DON JOSEPH

Oil, petrol and diesel are hazardous substances that can cause harm to the environment and the health of your family, employees and stock, so it comes as no surprise it must be stored and used appropriately.

It is for this reason farmers have legal obligations under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996 in relation to the handling and storage of fuel on farms, and under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, whereby farmers and business owners are required to provide a safe place of work for their employees.

In addition to these requirements, end-users of our products and produce are becoming more focused on the cycle of how a product is produced. Audits are carried out to show the entire process to ensure zero contamination occurs, and this includes fuel usage and storage. Many of our export markets are demanding this level of traceability.

Closer to home, the health hazard unlabelled or badly stored fuels can have to animals, children or our waterways cannot be underestimated. Oil and fuels are essential to many business and farming activities, but the results could be disastrous if they end up in the wrong hands, or consumed by pets or livestock.

Good storage and handling

You should ensure fuel tanks are maintained and checked regularly to prevent fuel leaking into the

ground, groundwater or waterways. This can also save you money by minimising fuel losses should the tank develop a leak. Proper storage and handling practises will also help prevent spills.

Some useful tips and suggestions:

- Make sure any oil or fuel stored around your farm or business is labelled correctly.
- Store oil on an impermeable surface such as concrete, and store away from drains.
- Check containers regularly to ensure they aren't leaking.
- If you spill oil, stop it from entering drains by absorbing it with sand or sawdust. Never hose it down a drain.
- Clean up spills immediately. If you have diesel fired heating, ensure that your oil tank and pipes are properly installed and regularly checked for leaks.
- If you refill vehicles from your fuel tank, make sure the bowser and nozzle are stored inside the bund so it catches any drips or leaks.
- Where more than 2,000 litre of petrol and/or diesel is stored in a facility on a farm, the farmer shall ensure an emergency response plan has been prepared and a person is in charge to lead this.

Storage requirements

If you store less than 1,000 litres of oil and fuels, you need to ensure they are stored on an



impervious surface, under cover and 10m away from a bore, wetland or waterway. In a shed with a concrete floor is the easiest way to do this.

If you store between 1,000 litres and 4,999 litres, you will need to meet additional conditions such as secondary containment, spill kits and procedures.

Storage of 5,000 litres or more will require resource consent.

Disposing of unwanted fuel or waste oil

It is important to make sure you dispose of unwanted or used fuel/oil safely and legally. If you are giving it to someone, or it is collected from your site, you should make sure the person or company it is going to is re-refining it or has resource consent to burn it or use it.

Local government rules

Always check with your local regional authority, district and city council to ensure you have up to date information regarding requirements for storage and handling of fuel.

You can also contact Ruralco and we can arrange for our bulk fuel supplier to provide details on current fuel storage and handling requirements.



For more information contact Don Joseph on 0800 RURAL NZ (787 256).

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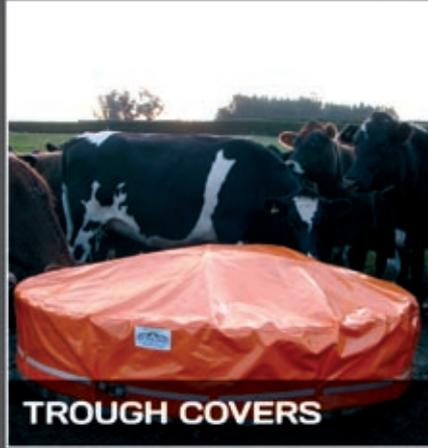


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Co-operatives—an extension of your farm business, or your other business?

“I only sell the co-op half of what I produce, that way I keep them honest”, words spoken by one of the member owners of a small co-operative at an annual meeting.

BY RAMSEY MARGOLIS

He didn't realise he was shooting himself in the foot and it will come as no surprise that neither the co-operative nor its member owners were doing very well. Not only did that shareholder's actions reduce his own income from the co-operative but that year every shareholder lost out. Put simply, he wasn't engaged enough to know that the co-operative was his business and realize its importance.

Speaking to people about co-operatives, one of the first questions I might ask is this: “Is your co-operative an extension of your business, or your other business?” How would you answer that?

Farmers in New Zealand are generally involved with more than one co-operative, and your answer will be different for each. You get supplies from one co-operative and fertiliser from another, and it's likely that you're involved in an irrigation co-operative as well. You might also be supplying a co-operative: a dairy cooperative perhaps, or a fruit growers' co-operative, or a meat co-operative, and you may well get your insurance from a mutually owned insurance business.

As you'll be more involved with some co-operatives than others, whether a co-operative is an extension of your business or your other business will differ according to how important a particular co-operative is to your farm, orchard or smallholding—your primary business.

But one thing that is true for all the co-operatives with which you trade is that as one of the shareholders of a co-operative, you will need to look after your co-op(s) with as much care as you do your primary business.

Co-operatives help your farm by providing what you need for the business to run more cheaply than the competition, while at the other end of the process your co-op gives you higher returns for what you produce.

As farmers and growers, you use a co-op as your business because you want a self-help solution to a business opportunity, and collaborating with others as part of a co-operative offers that opportunity, where on your own you just can't achieve the success you're looking for.

In a co-operative, you will find genuine democratic control of the business, and the benefits you

receive throughout the year as well as at the end of each year are based on your participation.

Co-operatives are not profit-maximising entities: they either buy inputs as cheaply as possible and sell to member owners as cheaply as possible, or they pay the highest possible price for your produce and then sell it for as much as possible. In short, co-ops are in business to maximise the profits of their shareholders' primary businesses, while the co-operative itself is profit conscious—aiming to do better than break even as shareholders would need to support their co-op if it were to make a loss.

In accountant speak, member benefits from belonging to a co-operative are above the line. They are in business to serve the needs of member owners by ensuring availability of services, and provide better levels of service with either lower charges or higher payments. Often the co-operative might also act as the representative of member owners in a particular industry.

Co-operatives are in business for the long run, and while most people support their co-operatives through thick and thin, sadly not all do. Co-operatives build up the muscle they need to support all members by getting maximum support from all of them. As you read *Real Farmer*, remember that you're one of the owners, that you have a say in how that business is run, and that the prosperity of your co-operative is as important to you as the prosperity of your farm or orchard.

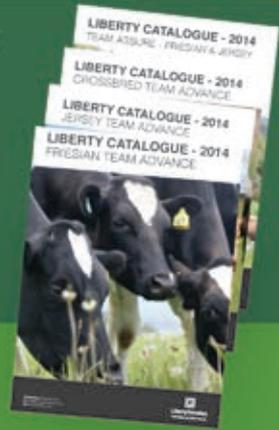
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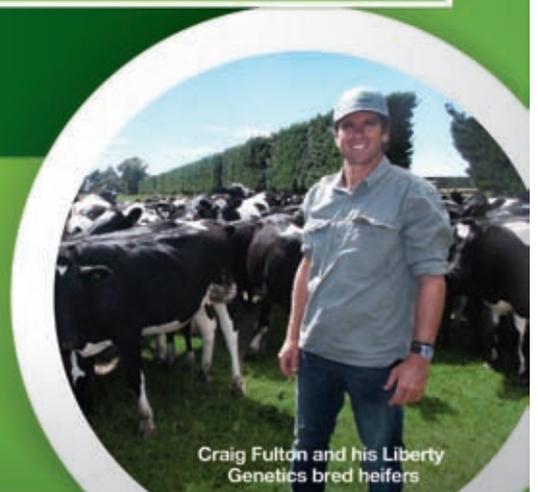
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- **Not-for-profit** – we're New Zealand-owned and not-for-profit, and we work for the benefit of our members – not to increase returns for shareholders or overseas owners.

*Terms, conditions and exclusions apply, see the policy documents.

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Local feed for local stock

Thousands of Kiwis grew up on porridge made by Flemings at its Creamoata factory in Gore; these days the plant processes locally grown wheat and barley into top-notch feed for dairy cows. BY LINDA CLARKE

Sgt Dan, a trademark in the Creamoata days, still oversees the plant and has loaned his name to the business now trading there, Sgt Dan Stockfoods.

Managing director Daryl Moyles said that like the entrepreneurial Fleming family, Sgt Dan Stockfoods wanted to be the best in the business.

Sgt Dan's is deliberately local to the Southland area. Daryl uses the best quality raw materials to make a high quality stockfood, so important to keep dairy cows growing and healthy. While most of the stockfood is for the dairy industry, Sgt Dan's also makes pellets for sheep, deer, horses, pigs and poultry.

Around 90 per cent of the wheat and barley used is grown in the Riversdale, Balfour and West Otago area, which Daryl rates as among the best cropping regions in the country.

The business began in 2005 and last season manufactured 20,000 tonne of product. There is capacity to grow and Daryl has a five-year plan to double production.

He said the customer base had grown impressively through just word of mouth; dairy farmers in the area use it as a supplementary feed for calves and dairy cows producing milk. Daryl's background in rural retail means he manages the production process, as well as

pitching in on the factory floor when needed.

He says nutritionist Natalie Crystal is a big influence in making sure the stockfood is meeting the needs of animals.

She regularly visits farms in the area, checking crop and soil conditions as well as monitoring animal health. Seasonal needs or influences mean animals might need more or less protein from their stockfood.

"She really knows her stuff," Daryl said. "She is very particular about raw materials and formulations."

He said Sgt Dan's had scientifically reviewed its entire product range over the past three years to make sure the pellets were best suited to the nutritional needs of stock in Southland area.

"We also analyse all our raw materials on a regular basis and do plenty of testing."

The pellet manufacturing process involves cooking the grain to make it more digestible, as well as adding minerals and vitamins. The end result is a nutritional super-pellet.

ABOVE: The historic Creamoata building in Gore

"It is really about balancing the diet. The ultimate food for dairy cows is grass, but sometimes it needs to be balanced with extra protein, starch or fibre, and that is an on-going process."

Daryl said Natalie used climate data going back 10 years and had access to work carried out by Southland's research farm when she reviews or reformulates products.

The large processing plant on Gorton Street employs 11 full-time staff and more seasonal workers are taken on at the peak of the manufacturing season.

Calf feed, which makes up about one-third of the business, is bagged while the rest of the dairy food is transported in bulk and augured into farmers' silos.

Sgt Dan's uses contract truck drivers to transport the feed all around Southland and South Otago from Balclutha to Tuatapere.



Sgt Dan Stockfoods
Historic Creamoata Building
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Co-op News

South Island Supplier Directory

Have you been wanting a full list of all the Ruralco Suppliers in your area that you can have with you in the car, or at home? We have printed a regionalised, South Island Supplier Directory for 2014 which is available upon request. Inside you'll find all the Ruralco Suppliers* listed by category, and their contact details.

To order your complimentary copy today contact us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or email us at ruralco@ruralco.co.nz. You can also check out the directory online at www.ruralco.co.nz/publications/supplierdirectory.



Check out the new suppliers in Nelson, Marlborough and Tasman

In mid-May we launched the Ruralco Card in the Nelson, Marlborough and Tasman regions, meaning lots of new suppliers at which you can use your Ruralco Card. These new suppliers have some fantastic deals on offer, so jump in and support them by using your Ruralco Card next time you visit. To keep up to date with where you can use your Ruralco Card, visit www.ruralco.co.nz/suppliers/newsuppliers.

Who would you like to see become a Ruralco Supplier?

Would you like to have a say in which businesses become suppliers? As we expand our supplier network, we are looking to sign on the businesses from each community that are most valuable to you and your family. If you know a business in your community which would make a great Ruralco Supplier, visit www.ruralco.co.nz/suppliers/suggestabusiness and let us know about it.



Winter is here

Daylight savings is long gone, and the nights are getting shorter and shorter. Are you prepared for the cold days and nights of winter? Here are some things you need to think about:

In case of a power cut or snow event:

- Check your generator runs well
- Fill up your gas bottle
- Warm blankets and hot water bottles are good to keep the kids warm, especially if you don't have a fire
- Stock up on candles and matches, or torches and batteries
- Some easy food to cook over the fire or barbeque, and hot drinks are good to have handy

If you're a winter lover:

- Get your skis/snowboard waxed and edges sharpened
- Make sure you have some warm thermals, a decent beanie and pair of gloves

- Stock up on some snacks and hot drinks
- Get some chains for your vehicle
- Grab a camera to capture your winter memories

For the driver of the family:

- Check the basics of your vehicle; tyre pressure and tread (remember the spare!), oil level, water level and antifreeze, lights
- Make sure you have a decent set of chains which fit well, especially if you live out of town
- Avoid sudden braking or direction changes to minimise the chance of losing control on black ice
- Carry a working torch and spare batteries
- Jumper leads are always handy

To find suppliers in your area which can help you cover these checklists, have a look at www.ruralco.co.nz/suppliers, or request your copy of the supplier directory by contacting us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or ruralco@ruralco.co.nz.



Ruralco Supplier Discounts

We have worked hard to secure you the best discounts possible using your Ruralco Card, it is important to note however that while you may get a discount on retail items, quite often this will not apply to quotes or sale items. Discounts are applied by the supplier at time of purchase, so make sure you let them know you are intending to pay via your Ruralco Card. You can check the discount for any supplier by visiting their page on www.ruralco.co.nz, if you still have any queries or questions you can contact us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or ruralco@ruralco.co.nz.

Members' Choice Award—it's your call!

We're asking you to select your favourite supplier, someone who offers you great value for money, exceptional service and goes beyond the call of duty to meet your needs. The supplier which receives the most votes will receive the prestigious Members' Choice Award at the 2014 Ruralco Supplier Awards. To cast your vote email ruralco@ruralco.co.nz, visit www.ruralco.co.nz/memberschoice or call 0800 (RURALNZ) 787 256. Get in quick, voting runs until 1 July.



Visit us at AgFest

On 4 and 5 July, Ruralco will be at AgFest and we're looking forward to seeing you there. Bring along your Ruralco Card, drop in to our tent and we will refund your entry fee. While you're there, grab a hot drink and catch up with one of our representatives, and make sure you visit our Ruralco Suppliers who will also be out and about.

**Offer valid for up to two entries only across both days. Ruralco Card must be presented to staff at the Ruralco Site to claim offer. The cost of entry will be credited to your account by Ruralco.*



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