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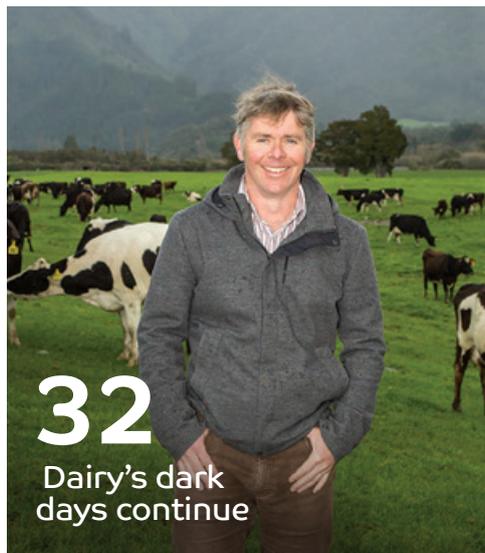
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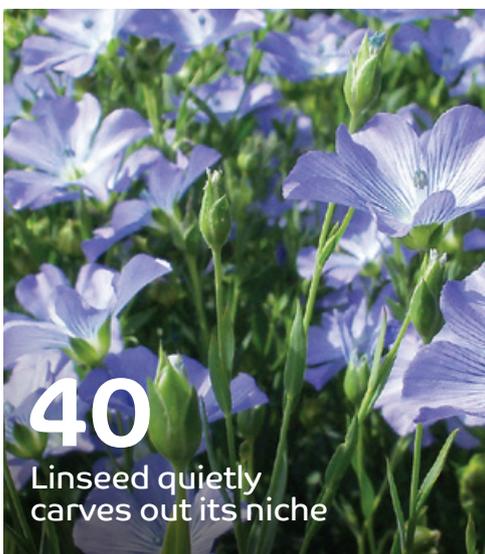
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ON THE COVER:
Tally Jackson and Daimien Reynolds with their three children, from left Ricki, Jacko & Lilly



Stud looks to future with next generation



Taking an Angus Stud with over 75 years history of quality breeding and keeping it relevant, competitive and profitable is happening with a new generation of management at Tataranui Stud.

BY RICHARD RENNIE

Located near Pahiatua, Northern Wairarapa, Tataranui is today run by a couple who bring some new vision to the stud, and new perspectives to the industry. Tally Jackson and Daimien Reynolds took over the management of Tataranui from Tally's parents John and Mary-Anne Jackson back in 2012.

The farm business comprises three stud operations spread over two farming properties, Tataranui at Pahiatua and Puke Te near Masterton, and a third commercial block is located near Makuri.

Angus, Romney and Dorset Down sheep come under the Tataranui stud umbrella.

The couple have bought some clear guiding principles to their breeding programme, with the expectation stock provide quality, commercially viable offspring to Tataranui's broad range of farming clients.

The Angus stud comprises of 350 breeding cows whose role is as critical to maintaining the feed performance of the farm's sheep, as it is to providing quality offspring for stud sales.

Like Tally's father John before her, Daimien and Tally recognise the valuable role the breeding cows play in maintaining pasture quality for the stud's ewes and lambs. The Angus cows' ability to convert rough feed into carcass weight means they are required to run behind ewes cleaning up pasture before lamb grazing.

A focus upon each cow's performance as a breeder starts early—for the past 20 years cows have been expected to get in calf as yearlings. While not an expectation for all studs, for Tataranui it is a key philosophy to be producing



OPPOSITE PAGE: Tally Jackson and Daimien Reynolds
ABOVE: Daimien and two of his valuable working dogs
BELOW: Angus is just one of the breeds that comes under the Tataranui stud umbrella

animals that fit with commercial reality.

"It has been done here for 20 years, and feeding in the first year can be the real challenge. That first winter with all the R1 heifers and the ewes on, we are fully stocked but need to ensure both are well fed and receive preferential treatment. After they have calved it's important to keep condition, and have them get in calf again," says Daimien.

Investment in extensive re-grassing across the property has helped ensure dry matter production can keep up with that seasonal demand, and Daimien is not afraid to apply DAP as needed to give growth a boost through early spring to meet the priority feed demand for ewes and the heifers.

Meantime the second calvers will assume their place behind the ewes as the pasture "clean-up crew".

It is not unusual for the mixed age cows to lose up to 100kg over winter, but it is also their ability to put it back on when conditions improve that has made the Tataranui animals a choice for farmers on tougher hill country throughout the lower North Island.

"Over the years there have been some very tough droughts, this summer is an exception growth wise, and farmers have noticed the ability of the Angus cows to tough it out, and really pick up well when growth picks up," says Daimien.

Cow performance is monitored by the Self Replacing Index which tracks cow weaning rates, cow survival rate, calving ease and progeny sale weight. The herd is increasingly separating from the breed society average, with latest index figures putting it at 125 against the society average index of 100.

Tataranui also invests effort in analysis of Estimated Breeding Values (EBV)s to evaluate sires consistently.

A key trait Daimien and Tally seek is a low to moderate birthweight bull that ensures easy calving, but can grow rapidly post birth to hit 200, 400 and 600 day weight targets.

Last year's yearling stud sale had an average Birth Weight EBV for the entire line offered of 3.3, against a national average of 4.4—the light weight bulls on offer had an EBV of 2.7, within the top 15% of the breed.

Daimien admits the big challenge, even the holy-grail, for breeders is to find that bull whose progeny will be low birthweight with rapid growth rates. In seeking that out he attributes John's efforts sourcing United States (US) genetics. This has involved regularly visiting artificial breeding centres and ranches, taking advantage of the significantly bigger genetic pool to source from there, in the search for those "curve bender" bulls with those appealing growth traits.

But the US trips also bring another level of resilience and carcass quality to the genetics underpinning Tataranui stock.

"John likes the carcass traits the US stock bring, including good marbling, weight and yield on the hook." And in the cattle ranching areas of the US the breeding herds are in tough environments.

"These areas can be covered in snow for several months of the year, with cows calving in conditions so cold calves' ears have to be taped to their heads to ensure they don't freeze off in the severe cold."

A key US sire, "Trust" has been grandsire for many of Tataranui's bulls has a low birthweight index figure of 2.9. He comes in the top 5% of the Angus breed in the US for ease of calving, with excellent gestation length, weaning weight and carcass weight data.

Semen and sires are also sourced from within NZ, including bulls from more traditional style studs. These can be animals exhibiting good





ABOVE: Daimien aims to deliver 40–50 high quality bulls at every year's sale

BELOW: The Angus stud comprises of 350 breeding cows to provide offspring for stud sales

structural features, something Damien says John has always had a good eye for.

"Breeding can be as much an art as a science—people will not buy an ugly bull, regardless of his numbers."

The father and son in law appear to have developed a good blend of traditional stockman's eye, meshing with Daimien's natural ability with data, spreadsheets and analysis.

"Everyone is looking for that curve bender and if it was so easy to find, everyone would have it."

As a breed Angus has enjoyed something of a renaissance over the past decade.

Daimien attributes this in part to the work of the Angus Pure brand, including the high profile McDonald's Angus burgers.

Within the farm gate, the performance of Angus cattle over some extremely tough seasons, particularly in the lower North Island, has prompted more farmers to look harder at the breed.

The stud's annual yearling and R2 bull sales draw strong crowds largely from around the lower North Island, and as far north as Taumarunui and Gisborne.

For Daimien every year's sale has a simple aim—to deliver 40–50 high quality bulls whose phenotype features are backed up with excellent EBV numbers, and the capacity to produce offspring that thrive in tough hill country conditions.

That robustness sought in Totaranui bulls also applies to the Romney stud, consisting of 600

ewes and replacements running alongside a 6,000 head commercial flock.

With a breeding history almost as long as the Angus stud's the Romney stud is today at the sharp end of the Romney revival.

Improvements in carcass yield and fertility mean more farmers are re-visiting Romneys as a versatile, low cost reliable breed base.

Daimien and Tally have a key aim to lift the fertility figures in their stud, presently running at a respectable 145% lambing percentage in the stud flock.

"We would like to get that nearer 150%. Some Romney breeders have already achieved that, it is possible but we would like to do it without compromising on lamb size."

Along with that comes the need to ensure good lamb growth rates that enable the lambs to be picked as prime off their mothers.

"If you cannot do that you are risking setting yourself up to be a slave to a dropping schedule. You have to have multiples, they

have to grow—that's the big prize for a successful commercial sheep breeder."

Running the ewe lambs in front of the ewes for preferential feeding ensures they are up to good tugging weights as hoggets.

Just as the Angus cows are expected to get in calf as one year olds, ewe hoggets are required to do the same.

For lambing ease the hoggets are mated to a Wiltshire ram, delivering a "chunky" lamb that can be picked off their mother as prime.

The third tier in the Totaranui breeding regime is the family's Dorset Down stud, run on the Masterton property, Puke Te.

These are farmed alongside 6,000 Romney commercial ewes and 400 commercial cows on that property, and are one of the biggest Dorset Down flocks in New Zealand today.

The breed has capitalised on its suitability as a terminal sire, injecting hybrid vigour into flocks and strong growth rate genetics.





While “any amount” of money could be spent on the usual areas of fertiliser, subdivision and water reticulation at Totaranui, it is water that is the focus for the couple this season.

They are aiming to have all the hill country reticulated over the coming season. But the bigger goal Daimien and Tally are holding firm to is achieving 400kg of meat and wool production per hectare off the property in a year.

“We are planning on achieving 300kg/ha this year, and the 400 figure is an achievable goal, although it is a big reach, that would put us in about the top 10% of farms.”

Couple bring new perspective to stud business. Daimien Reynolds and Tally Jackson are the new generation of couples settling on family farms, and bringing new perspectives to the sheep and beef sector.

Daimien’s background includes a corporate background in marketing, having worked in tourism consultancy and Deer Industry NZ.

Tally brings additional business horsepower to the partnership, with a degree in business studies majoring in accounting, and having a corporate accounting background.

Daimien credits a big part of the stud’s successful running to Tally’s skill with numbers, and attention to the cost components that go with running a relatively complex farm operation.

For his part Daimien’s ability to analyse data means breeding indices and statistics associated with critical benchmark data like Estimated Breeding Values for the stud are well understood and acted upon.

ABOVE: The Dorset Down stud ewes are farmed alongside 6,000 Romney commercial ewes and 400 commercial cows

BELOW: Tally and Daimien took over the management of Totaranui from Tally’s parents back in 2012

Before taking over the running of Totaranui in 2012, the couple had also augmented their business skills with some additional farming experience and exposure.

Daimien and Tally managed Totaranui for two years, then moved on to manage the Brownrigg Agriculture Poukawa block in Hawke’s Bay for three years before returning to Totaranui.

It was an invaluable experience that highlighted to him the value of good pasture management for maximising profit.

“As a corporate operation they are very focussed on profit, with a strong philosophy of ‘look after your pasture, and it will look after you’. Their grazing systems are all about maintaining pasture quality.”

The entire stud operates on a rotational grazing basis now, with careful prioritising of species type in terms of grazing order.

Pasture renovation and use of red clover and herb varieties in pasture swards is used to maximise forage quality and the potential weight gains that can be earned off them.

Crops like Plantain, while expensive to maintain and spray for diseases, can deliver \$2,500 gross margin/hectare, almost twice what the harder hill country can generate.

Daimien also sees more potential for lucerne on the drier country in Masterton, at present accounting for 15ha of crop, but doubling every year.

The couple are among Ruralco’s most recent cardholders, and also among the first in the North Island. Tally said she was attracted by the particularly generous discounts offered through the Ruralco Supplier network.

“The offers are definitely more reasonable than many of the other retailers, and we are looking forward to the range of discounts offered, and the fact Ruralco is a farmer focussed co-operative,” she says.



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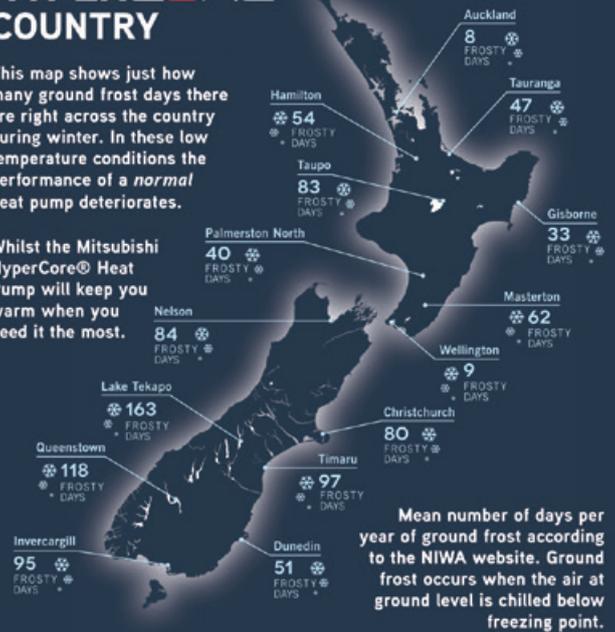
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Water balance in the spotlight again

Restrictions on land use intensification and future irrigation growth were among the key features of Environment Canterbury's (ECan) Hinds Plan Change 2 announced last month. NEAL SHAW, GROUP CEO

Unsurprisingly, this has raised the ire of those affected. Water is always a highly emotive issue, especially when it is so intrinsically linked to the livelihoods of our rural communities.

Everybody, no matter what their interest, wants high quality and reliable water for a variety of reasons. Fishermen, conservationists and environmentalists, and farmers all share a similar vision for quality water but for different reasons. Finding the balance between all of these needs and groups is always going to be a difficult task, but it is one which regional councils are charged with and must do to ensure this important resource is available to all, both now and in the future.

It doesn't mean they always get it right, and there are flaws with its decision released last month.

Environment Canterbury's Hinds Plan Change 2 comes under the umbrella of the Land and Water Regional Plan, and affects an area where water is already over-allocated, or "Red Zoned". It is also a highly productive area which has come ahead in leaps and bounds over the last 15 years or so.

ECan announced it had accepted the recommendations of independent commissioners, Peter Skelton and David Caygill. In making the announcement, Peter Skelton was reported as saying, "The availability of plentiful clean water has been a critical ingredient in the catchment's economic success. Water resources are now showing signs of stress, nitrogen levels are increasing and water availability is decreasing."

When the Plan Change 2 takes effect, further land intensification will be prohibited until nitrate levels meet an annual shallow groundwater concentration of 6.9mg/L as opposed to the current average of 9mg/L. Most farmers are already working hard to address nitrate levels, and with advances in soil monitoring technology and the likes, it is clear this is already a work in progress. Like many imposed compliance rules, there are some obvious benefits which are helpful to farmers. Understanding soil quality and its holding capacity allows farmers to spend money on fertiliser and irrigation where and when it is needed instead of in an ad hoc manner which was often the case for many in years gone by.

The most controversial recommendation agreed to by the council was that Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation (BCI) will be prevented from being granted a replacement scheme discharge permit when its current permit expires in 2018. This applies to any land in the Hinds/Hekeao area not irrigated before

15 February 2016. It has been met with anger from those involved in BCI and I can see why.

The rules impact harshly on the future growth of the scheme in this area. The same recommendation has not been made with regard to the RDR, with properties still able to be developed under Rangitata Diversion Race Management Ltd's discharge permit until it expires in 2019.

Understandably, BCI feels it has been dealt an unfair blow, and at the time of writing this, the scheme was reportedly looking at options to appeal the decision (which can only be done on points of law).

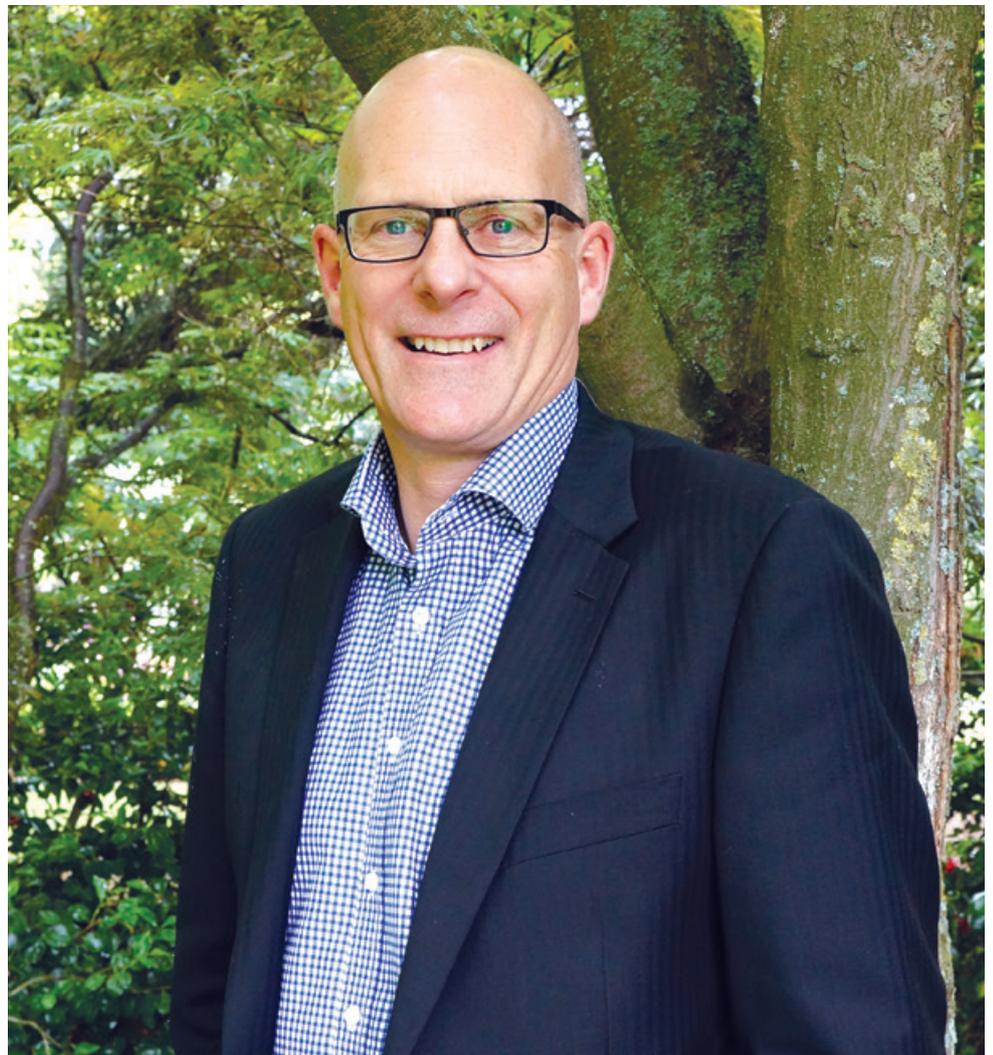
The Hinds Plan Change is one of many water policies and rules being worked through and developed by a variety of groups through the Canterbury Water Strategy and ECan. Further plan changes for other catchments are currently at different stages, with Environment Canterbury's

Nutrient Management and Waitaki Plan Change 5 to the Land and Water Regional Plan also going through a public submission process.

The balance between productivity, land management, the environment and future needs is always tricky, but we are now in an era where for the vast majority, farming without water is not an option. This is especially so for those farming the East Coast of New Zealand where there can be big variables in weather patterns and having water allows farmers to even out these peaks and troughs.

I applaud BCI's concerns. It is right they highlight this issue and its implications for future growth in the region. It is important we all understand what this, and other decisions will mean for farming today and for in the future. We can't be short-sighted.

BELOW: Neal Shaw, Group CEO



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More days in milk

The modern dairy cow represents tremendous genetic advancements over her cousin from years gone by. Foremost among the improvements is her ability for extended lactation—an obvious source of productivity gains. ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY SEALESWINSLOW



High genetic merit cows have made a big contribution to dairy farming profitability. Easily capable of maintaining a lactation period of 305 days, and longer if required, these animals have what it takes to achieve productivity goals, regardless of farming system.

And in case you're wondering, the current national average lactation period comes in at a modest 273 days.

Dry cows are a costly business

Fundamentally, keeping cows in milk for an extended period makes commercial sense. A dry cow, by contrast, incurs feed and grazing costs, which magnify if the cow is to put on weight. Without a corresponding milk income, dry cows become a cost burden.

But optimising the farmer's return on investment through lactation isn't merely a matter of good genetics, it also requires a thoughtful farming strategy. Planning ahead for the seasonal pattern and conditions is crucial. Accordingly, as the season draws to a close there are conflicting challenges: building up feed reserves for winter, increasing cow condition to target 5.5 condition score at calving, while also feeding to keep the milk flowing and optimising days in milk.

Determining the cost-effectiveness of a cow in milk is definitely multi-faceted. Paul Sharp, SealesWinslow Science Extension Officer, acknowledges that several factors come into play, such as body condition scores and the amount of feed on hand. Feeding the right supplements,

strategically late in lactation, often pays—particularly this season—if that is what's necessary to keep cows in milk and the cash flowing.

"Ultimately, it's about increasing the efficiency of your herd and maintaining an income flow. And a dry cow doesn't help pay the bills," he says, "yet she still consumes 10 to 15 kg of dry matter every day."

Balanced nutrition is key

One of the main considerations, and indeed a critical success factor for extending the lactation period, is providing the right feed with the right balance of nutrients. A late-lactation pregnant cow, whose stomach capacity is severely reduced, can struggle with bulky silage and straw that is high in fibre as it takes up valuable rumen volume. She responds better to energy-dense feed, which occupies less room while supplying her and the growing calf with the nutrients they need.

A cost-effective option is SealesWinslow's Production Push, which provides optimal nutrition with processed starch in pellet form; it is digested more efficiently and with less wastage, both in the shed and through the cow, making more energy available for milk production. Formulated for year-round use and to keep cows producing longer, it's becoming a staple to complement autumn pasture and silage through Canterbury and Otago.

Of course, pasture remains the most convenient and cheapest feed. With a focus on grazing management, use of irrigation and regular nitrogen application, it will generally be of high quality, affording excellent protein and fibre levels throughout autumn. "However, to maximise milk production, you need to ensure a proper balance of nutrients," advises Paul, who strongly recommends carrying out a herbage test. It will determine the precise level of nutrients your animals are getting. Importantly, it will also allow you to formulate a balanced diet for your cows. And that's an important step for achieving better productivity.

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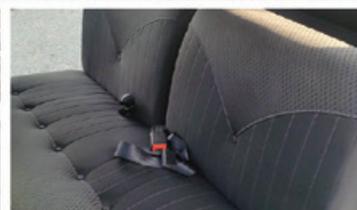
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The bottom line of feeding

Farmers spend millions of dollars every year growing, selling and buying feed for dairy cows and other livestock.

BY LINDA CLARKE

It has never been more important to know the yield of winterfeed crops and dry matter, says Tom Kearney of Canterbury Feed Assessment (CFA).

The Ashburton farmer bought the established Independent Feed Assessment business a year ago and is gearing up for another busy winterfeed season, when growers and buyers alike want to know dry matter yields of crops like fodderbeet, kale, rape and oats.

Year-round, a staff of six work out of CFA's Robinson Street laboratory in Ashburton's Riverside Industrial Estate; extra personnel come on board for the winterfeed season.

Tom says being independent gives confidence to both grower and buyer; their experienced assessors make a call based on evidence available at the time. That evidence is gathered and analysed by experienced operators using proven and researched methods.

The whole process is now accredited by International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ), an internationally recognised organisation that assesses competence, integrity, results and compliance.

"Feed is a big part of farmers' budgets, whether

they were buying or selling, so getting the dry matter and yield right is important."

CFA's water testing service, bought recently from McMillan Drilling Group, is also IANZ accredited and has been since 1999. Tom says they will be continuing the same service and high standard of testing McMillans delivered, using qualified staff and delivering accurate and reliable results, quickly.

Acquiring the water testing service from McMillans also means it is easier for farmers, businesses or private home-owners to have their water samples tested. CFA can test house water, irrigation water, water from creeks, streams and rivers, and swimming pool water.

Water samples have to be kept chilled and tested within 24 hours. "Farmers can put it in the truck when they come to town and drop it off here. It's convenient and fast."

Tom and his wife Jaimee are constantly looking at ways to improve their services and testing

techniques, and acquiring the water testing service made sense.

He said the IANZ accreditation was important for farmers and growers to have confidence and reassurance that CFA's methods and equipment was accurate.

Testing staff, most former farmers with many years' experience in the paddock, go out to the field and cut a number of representative samples. Then the crop is dried to ascertain dry matter.

Tom said feed worth about \$60 million was traded on the back of their assessments last year.

"Either side of the ledger, it is a massive part of a farm's business so it makes sense it should be done by an accredited organisation. Just one per cent in the accuracy of dry matter can make a huge difference to yields."

A new component to the business is NIR profiling. This hi-tech feed testing makes use of a NIR (near infra-red) spectrometer to read protein, fibre and digestibility.

Tom said infra-red light was passed over the feed sample and the results were quick and accurate. The machine is imported from Denmark and another tool for farmers wanting more information about exactly what their livestock are eating.

CFA's feed and water customers are spread all over the South Island and parts of the North Island and Tom says distance is no problem.



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Caution on power costs linked to irrigation schemes

With several significant irrigation schemes recently commissioned and underway through Canterbury, a new age in farm productivity is being heralded for the region.

BY RICHARD RENNIE



Last year's commissioning of Stage 1 of the \$172 million Central Plains Water scheme with its 132km of pipework delivering water to 20,000ha is the most significant of the schemes.

Other projects include Barhill Chertsey and Rangitata South, with more in the irrigation "pipeline" including the proposed Hunter Downs project.

But when tapping into an irrigation scheme and the promise of more secure water supply can still bring unanticipated pumping expenses. Often these can catch farmers off guard, but "forewarned is forearmed", and knowledge of them can help when negotiating contracts and terms with electricity supply companies before the valuable water starts to flow.

One cost area little understood but significant are capacity charges. These have a big impact upon a network company's ability to know the full potential demand upon its network, and to make the investments needed to ensure it can meet that demand.

The growth in irrigation infrastructure through the region in the past decade alongside large scale run of river schemes has bought particular demands on the electricity network, as irrigators have also kept deep well pumps on in place as a "standby" measure.

Some years ago irrigators had the choice over opting for either a lower fixed rate capacity charge, or a higher daily rated charge on these pumps.

However for local network company EA Networks, a capacity charge is now the sole charging mechanism.

The company would liken a capacity charge as being similar to building a bridge capable of taking the maximum weight of traffic upon it, rather than the average weight—accounting for the fact that in years of take restriction there is no diversity in

usage patterns, and everyone wants to irrigate at once (ie all "use the bridge at the same time").

While farmers may opt to hang onto their deep well pumps as a form of "insurance" against low flow years, electricity networks are still compelled to have an infrastructure in place capable of coping with spikes in demand that do occur over a dry season when those pumps are all activated.

EA Networks continues an extensive asset upgrading programme to keep the system capable of managing spikes in demand that will occur in future years.

Similarly Orion has a capacity charge. For farmers on the CPW scheme maintaining deep well pumps, capacity charges will also still apply.

There are however some steps that can be taken to minimise the capacity charge on standby pumps.

The most common mistake was to over spec pumps, opting for machines bigger than necessary, therefore incurring a capacity charge based on the kilowatt capacity of a pump that exceeds pumping needs.

Another option increasingly being considered over tougher times is alternative power sources.

Options like solar and wind generation are coming down, but diesel generators are also an option open to consideration as oil prices track closer and closer to US\$25 a barrel, with bulk diesel fuel available at 80–85¢ a litre.

For electricity network companies an irrigating hinterland brings some peculiar demands to a company's costs and charges, of which the capacity charge is just one.

Hooking up to an irrigation system also means other charges will continue to appear on electricity statements.

Energy

This includes a network "lines charge" broken into two key components.

The company has to pay Transpower as the national grid operator to deliver power to a "grid exit point" in the network company's region, from where it picks it up through its own network for local delivery.

Typically this "transmission" charge will comprise a third to a quarter of the lines charges, with the remainder being a "local distribution" charge.

The local distribution charge will vary depending upon a particular network company's efficiency, age and capital costs.

When examining a power bill, it is critical to determine whether any increase has come from the "lines" portion of the statement, or from the "energy" component.

Mid Canterbury is blessed with one of the country's most efficient and low cost "Lines" charges through EA Networks, among the country's three cheapest. The November 2015 survey of domestic electricity prices lists the EA Network's lines charge at 7.9¢/kWh. However the region also has some of the highest energy costs, at 19¢/kWh.

For local lies companies distribution costs are also impacted by tight regulations, set by the Commerce Commission. These are set five years in advance, firmly establishing price limits, aimed at getting lines companies to focus hard on controllable costs.

The transmission charge is one lines companies have no control over, instead determined by Transpower's own capital expenditure and government's expected rate of return for the SOE.

Another issue network companies want irrigators to deal with is "harmonics", or "harmonic distortion". This is the effect some devices have when they draw current from the grid, distorting the quality of the supplied current.

Irrigation, with its complex network of pumps and electric engines brings significant harmonic issues which at peak periods can have significant impacts upon other users' equipment, particularly sensitive gear like laptops and transformers.

All Canterbury's lines companies have adopted international standards to mitigate harmonic distortion.

This includes Variable Speed Drive devices having a filter fitted on all equipment that is installed new.

EA Networks also requires customers to also reduce harmonics on equipment installed on all pre-2009 equipment, either by also fitting a filter, installing "soft start" technology, or disconnecting the equipment.

For more information on this topic or any other energy issues, please contact Tracey Gordon, ATS Energy Account Manager on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) today.

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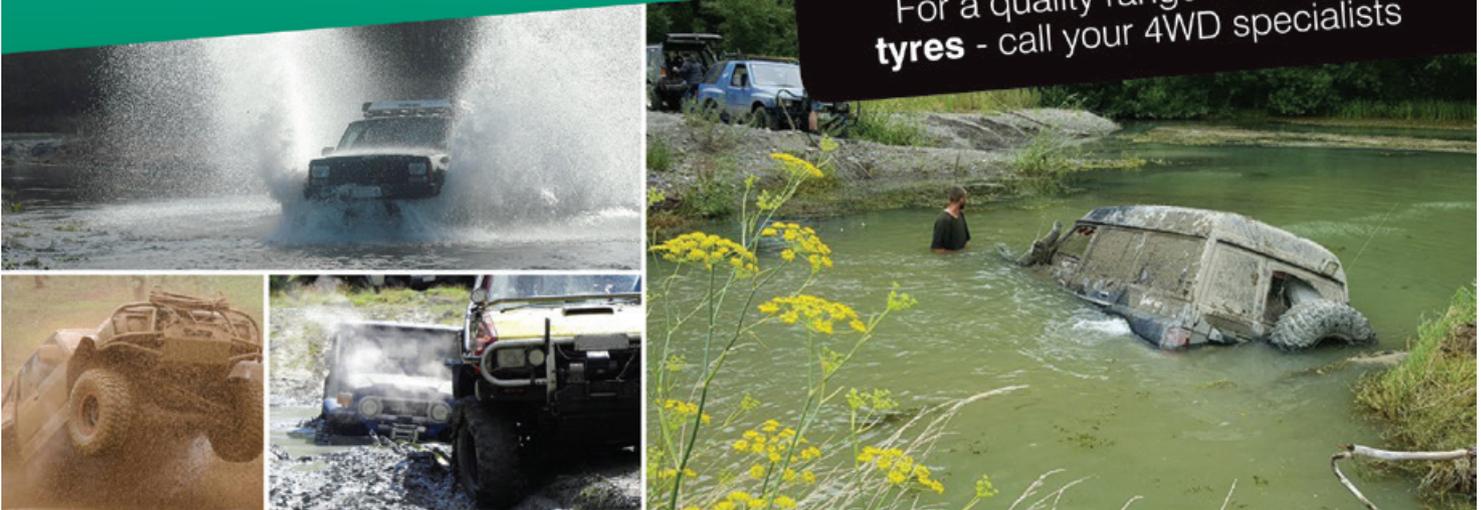


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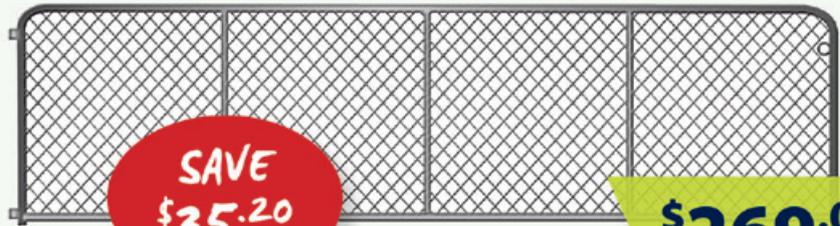
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Six generations of Reads in Mid Canterbury

Blackcurrants aren't just a commercial fruit grown by Mid Canterbury's Read family—they're a routine part of their diet.

BY KATE TAYLOR

"We have a special family recipe for blackcurrant juice," says Mike Read, "but it disappears very quickly. It's a precious commodity. Mum has developed the recipe over 40 years of trial and error really. We have a lot of memories of drinking blackcurrant juice as kids. It's a secret though. She guards it closely"

Mum is otherwise known as Margaret, who with husband Kerry ran the blackcurrant business and a mixed arable farm near Hinds for many years. Now two of their three children are on the property and looking ahead to a bright future.

Mike says the past three years have been about creating a succession plan built around him and younger brother Steve coming home to the farm. Succession planning can be a stressful and challenging process for many farming families so they decided right at the very start of the process to build an advisory team that understood what the family was setting out to achieve and was committed to helping the family reach its succession goals.

"The advisory group includes our accountant, solicitor, rural bank manager and farm advisor. We have been so lucky that every person on this team has provided vital input that has seen us well on our way. We continue to work closely with all of these people and they continue to play an active role in strategic decisions made in our business.

"After many informal family meetings over a cup of coffee and sometimes a beer or two, and formal meetings with our advisory team, we mapped out a strategy that provides a robust framework for continuing the momentum of the business through the ongoing transition process."

It was decided Kerry and Margaret would sell a block of land to each of the boys and a farming company would be formed to run the day to day farming operation, which created an opportunity



for Mike and Steve to manage a large scale business without requiring full ownership.

The farm consists of 150ha of blackcurrants and a 300ha intensive mixed arable unit the boys are responsible for running—with the support of Kerry and Margaret.

"We were aware our parents had built a big business and we have built this plan around everyone's involvement. We run everything together from the day-to-day work on the farm right through to completing the monthly accounts. I've been on the farm for seven years and Steve for four and we divide the work by focusing on our individual strengths that fortunately complement each other well."

Older sister Emily and husband Chris Edge manage a dairy farm south of Hinds. Mike, who has a background in real estate in Christchurch, had moved back to the farm about a year before

OPPOSITE PAGE: Together the Read brothers run the day to day work on the farm

ABOVE: Steve and Michael Read in the blackcurrant rows which takes up 150ha of the farm in Hinds

BELOW: The 2016 linseed harvest underway

the devastating 2011 earthquakes shook the province. Steve, with a background in diesel engineering, worked for Claas Harvest Centre in Ashburton before coming home to the farm with partner Sarah Reith.

Mike says none of it would have been possible without his parents.

"They grew the business over 40 years and still play an active role. They have handed the reins over but we know the legacy they've given us. We're extremely lucky to have the opportunity to be in the position we are—building on what they created."

Kerry had been fortunate to be given an opportunity to farm a small pocket of land near Hinds owned by his late parents, Ken and Kath. Wheat, barley and cocksfoot were the staple crops back then. In a bid to improve the farm's earning capacity while also spreading risk, Kerry decided to grow blackcurrants. And the rest, as they say, is history... a history that is important to the family. "Both Steve and I are sixth generation farmers in the Mid Canterbury region," says Mike.

"So there's a huge family knowledge that's been instilled in us since we were kids. Farming here is in our blood."

One lesson Kerry has taught the boys is that timing is the key to being a successful farmer, whether it is purchasing livestock or taking advantage of a small weather window, as being organised and getting things done when things are optimal can be the difference between the





success or failure of a crop. Regular visits and paddock walks with agronomist Dave Gill ensures the boys keep on top of any problems on the horizon and up to date with the most effective products on the market.

Contractors have always been used for spraying and fertiliser spreading in the arable business.

The boys have continued their father's long working relationship with spray contractor Johnny McGillen and ground spreading contractor Mike Cairns.

"When we need to cover large areas of ground with a spray or fertiliser application we can have multiple trucks on farm getting the work done that would be impossible if we did this work ourselves," says Mike Read.

The focus has moved from succession to development.

"We've increased the blackcurrant area from 100 to 150 hectares and we are developing irrigation systems and creating more efficient systems in the arable business. We have been focusing on more efficient crop establishment by purchasing modern cultivation and seeding equipment that has decreased the number of passes we make across a paddock, in some instances by half. We have invested significantly in this equipment but the savings in labour and fuel costs will ensure the investment pays for itself in a very short time."

Mike and Steve work out on the farm and Kerry helps when needed. There is one full time staff member and between nine and 13 staff are brought in on a temporary or casual basis during the blackcurrants peak harvest period.

The Reads grow five different varieties of

blackcurrants with certain varieties grown for increased health benefits, while others are preferred for their taste and juice-making qualities.

Unfortunately the blackcurrants were frosted in the middle of flowering in early November, which Michael estimates has reduced their yield by 40%.

"We don't normally need frost protection. It was a freak event—a one-in-seven-year event—that affected all the other growers as well."

Kerry and Margaret were pioneers in getting the berries established in Mid Canterbury as well as seeing markets developed in tandem with production growth. There is a three year time lag before the bushes produce harvestable amounts with peak production through years four, five and six before declining and requiring pruning. Depending on the age of the bushes and their

variety, production can vary from six tonnes per hectare through to 15t/ha.

Mike says most of New Zealand's blackcurrants are grown in Canterbury.

"There is a concentration of them around Ashburton due to the favourable climate for blackcurrants—the availability of water and high UV sunlight in the summer time to ripen the fruit. They like a cold frosty winter and then a warm summer... a good, typical Canterbury season."

The Reads' blackcurrant operation is certified under the New Zealand GAP quality assurance programme, which requires it to meet strict quality perimeters and prove the farm produces its fruit in a safe and sustainable manner, Michael says.

Kerry and Margaret had previously supplied fruit to GlaxoSmithKline, the makers of the iconic Ribena brand, now owned by global drinks brand, Frucor.

"We've continued to grow our business with them and we also supply the grower-owned New Zealand Blackcurrant Co-operative, which markets our New Zealand blackcurrant products around the world. The co-op is about adding value to what can be viewed as a commodity product. Value is gained by selling it in IQF form (individually quick frozen) or as a powder for high value nutraceutical markets," he says.

Valuable vitamin C levels and anthocyanins in blackcurrants are now recognised by the nutraceutical health food market (anthocyanins are water-soluble pigments occurring in some berries that have potential benefits around aging, inflammatory diseases and cancer. Oil from blackcurrant seeds is also known to be high in the essential fatty acid known as gamma-linolenic acid (GLA).

"We can see real growth potential in blackcurrants both in terms of increasing yields per hectare on farm and because New Zealand produce is considered amongst the best in the world," says Mike.

ABOVE: Ashburton has a favourable climate for Blackcurrants due to the availability of water and high UV sunlight

BELOW: The Reads have focused on more efficient crop establishment by purchasing modern cultivation and seeding equipment





The business has been working to reduce its environmental impact as part of its GAP programme.

“We’re doing that by investing in new and more efficient and environmentally-friendly equipment. We also have a new tractor and harvester that meet the tough European standards as well, so we’re aiming for the highest standards for things like fuel efficiency.”

Because of the versatility of the Read land at Hinds, they are able to grow a wide range of arable crops offering them some protection against swings in markets.

“For example, generally over the past few years the arable side of the business has focused on supplying supplement feeds to local dairy farms while the dairy industry has been strong. But with the reduced grain prices and tightening belts in the dairy market at the moment, we can concentrate our arable farm on supplying the small seed market which for us includes radish, mustard, cabbage and beet seeds. They’re grown through seed merchants in Ashburton for markets in the northern hemisphere. We grow the seeds here because it allows the owners of the seed to basically get two harvests in one year— one in our summer and one in the Northern Hemisphere summer.”

The arable farm also grows wheat and barley for livestock feed and linseed for oil extract, as well as marrowfat peas for the Asian snack market. Fodder beet and kale are grown for winter grazing by neighbouring dairy cows.

Mike says quality soils and irrigation is the reason Mid Canterbury punches above its weight when it comes to food production.

“We are successful because of that access to a reliable water system,” he says.

The Reads operate five trailing guns, one rotainer and one lateral irrigator across 100% of the property. This harvest season started off with challenging unseasonal rain in January.

“But after the rain, the season became favourable with hot, dry Canterbury days through February. We have good access to reliable irrigation on our farm but our soils also support growing arable

crops even when the conditions are a bit drier.”

The dry growing pressure has reduced the disease pressure across the board although the yields have been a bit variable.

“Some crops have done very well, some have gone poorly and others have been decidedly average. But again, a strength of our business is the diversity of being able to grow a huge range of crops, which shields us from market forces one way or another.”

New crops or new varieties are always considered.

“We can essentially follow markets year to year.”

Store lambs are bought in February/March (after the harvest) and sold in October/November.

The lambs benefit from the shelter offered by the blackcurrant bushes through the winter while the ample supply of grass and clover through the rows and headlands provides an excellent feed source for finishing them.

“We try to buy 2,000 lambs for the season depending on feed availability.”

The Read land borders both banks of the Hinds River in a bit of a zig zag with other

neighbours from the Hinds township to beyond Black Bridge. The family’s proximity to and affinity with the river has meant the brothers have been interested in proposed changes to water regulations for the region.

“There has been a framework of action to address the over allocation of water resources and nutrients in the Hinds Plains area, which involves farmers reducing their nitrogen losses and being more efficient with ground water resources. We are pleased with the Commissioners’ decision to enable us to switch our surface water takes to deep groundwater, although this will add significant cost to the farm in terms of capital outlay and ongoing pumping costs, we feel it is a positive move for the health of our district,” Michael says.

“We had a close bond with the river growing up alongside it as children. We are encouraged to see work being done to put plans in place to preserve what we enjoyed as kids. The next generation has the right to enjoy it too.”

ABOVE: Store lambs are bought in February and are finished on the ample supply of grass and clover
BELOW: The versatility of their land means they are able to grow a wide range of crops
BOTTOM: Mike inspecting a recent linseed crop grown for oil extract for the Asian market





Energy to burn

Harnessing the sun's energy to reduce your electricity bill is no longer the domain of greenies aspiring to live off the grid. BY LINDA CLARKE

Mum and dad home-owners all over the South Island are using solar energy as part of a traditional ventilation system that can dramatically reduce your heating costs in the winter. The SolarPro system is unique in that it can also be retro fitted to existing ventilation systems.

Homes are warmer, drier and healthier, and your heating costs can be slashed by 30 per cent.

SolarPro has been heating homes in Southland for four years and is now being sold and installed in Canterbury homes by Ashburton owner-operator David Taylor. He said the system was designed, developed and made in Invercargill to withstand New Zealand's harsh environment.

Home size doesn't matter - most residential installs require one or two solar panels and the filtered air is distributed throughout every room in your home from ceiling vents.

He said the problem with most ventilation systems was that home-owners turned them off in the winter when cold air was being circulated. But that was when ventilation was needed most to combat condensation, moisture and mould.

The SolarPro comes into its own in winter using the sun's energy to heat air. The heat produced by the solar panels is pushed down into the home through the ventilation system.

An easy-to-operate control panel fixed to an internal wall shows temperatures in the house and in the roof cavity, and your desired internal temperature. When that is reached, the panels switch off. It can also be set to

purge unwanted smells like cigarette smoke and strong cooking odours.

He said a great deal of research and development had gone into the design to ensure maximum efficiency with trials in some of the coldest, dampest places in Southland.

The result was a product gaining traction for its integrity and performance.

In Canterbury, David carries out the initial consultation and assessment, and can refer home-owners to other customers to talk about how the system performs. Installation happens within two weeks of a decision to purchase, so if you're thinking about the coming winter then it is not too late.

He said over 50 systems had been installed around Canterbury in the last few months and SolarPro was rapidly turning into a household name throughout New Zealand.

After-sale care is also part of the package, including helping people to operate the control panel, filter replacements and keeping in contact with SolarPro customers to ensure they get the most out of their system.

The system starts working as soon as it is switched on and it may take several weeks for moisture-laden furniture and furnishings like



ABOVE: David Taylor is the owner-operator of SolarPro which has been heating homes for over four years now
MAIN IMAGE: Canterbury has more than enough sunshine hours to power the panels, which are fixed to a north-facing roof

curtains to dry out. Reducing moisture, dust and asthma triggers also helps those with respiratory conditions or allergies.

David said Canterbury had more than enough sunshine hours to power the panels, which are fixed to a north-facing roof.

Prices vary, depending on house size and the presence any existing ventilation systems, so David says its best to talk costs with him.

He has a SolarPro on his own house and said it was important the system not only worked well, but was sustainable. "And because we are local, people only need to pick up the phone and call us if they have any questions about their system."



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Make it a team effort

Knowing how to run the sophisticated irrigation equipment and technology available today can be a daunting task. But when spending thousands of dollars every year on precious water, the cost of farm staff not knowing how to operate and maintain an irrigation system is a huge risk. BY WATERFORCE ASHBURTON



A single blocked nozzle on a centre pivot can cause several hectares of grass to die off in a short space of time. Alternatively, rotation and application rates of centre pivots if not managed accurately, can saturate your paddocks and lead to expensive water evaporating into thin air.

The team at WaterForce believe a key factor on farm to get the most out of an irrigation system for less is ensuring system and operation efficiency. Understanding what water is available, and how best to distribute this to get the best results.

An efficient irrigation system relies not only on great design and hardware, but the knowledge and confidence to keep it running effectively. A focus of the team at WaterForce is to work with not only farm owners and their managers,

but also their staff on farm. Waterforce works to educate them on the very best operating procedures, and to also create awareness on basic irrigation practices.

"Given the importance of irrigation these days, it's got to be a team effort on farm" says Gemma Williams-Gray from WaterForce Ashburton.

We are trying to work closely with our customers to provide them and their staff the tools and understanding they require to recognize and report issues, understand the required fix, and see how we can eliminate the issue from reoccurring. "It's about knowing what warning signs to look out for, and performing the necessary regular maintenance," says Gemma.

Staff on farm should understand how to perform regular daily or weekly checks on equipment, and keep an 'issues log' so any patterns can be recognised. This is particularly useful when off-season maintenance is being carried out.

Knowing what has occurred on-farm over the previous months will help your irrigation company pinpoint wider issues that might need to be addressed.

Learning what signs to look out for on the land is a key tell-tale on a system's efficiency.

Is the ground saturated? Is grass dying off? Are stripes appearing in your pasture?

These are all signs that the application isn't quite right, or there may be other issues apparent.

Ensuring all sprinkler nozzles are sized correctly and functioning well are other examples of easy checks which can have big consequences.

Sediment build up in your system causing unnecessary wear on your infrastructure, is another issue to monitor closely as part of your weekly checks on farm. This check prevents any disturbance to distribution uniformity, and also shortening the life span of your equipment.

Do staff adjust application rates based on the requirement of the crop? Or do they adjust rotation time based on current soil moisture capacity?

Are you aware of what the power consumption is for each part of your system, and do staff know what to "power off" when possible to save energy.

Making all farm staff aware of these irrigation subtleties is a sensible move. It's all about making good informed choices within your day to day farming operation which will ultimately save you power, water and eliminate loss of production and breakdown fees.

Every day that a problem goes unnoticed is literally water (and money) down the drain.

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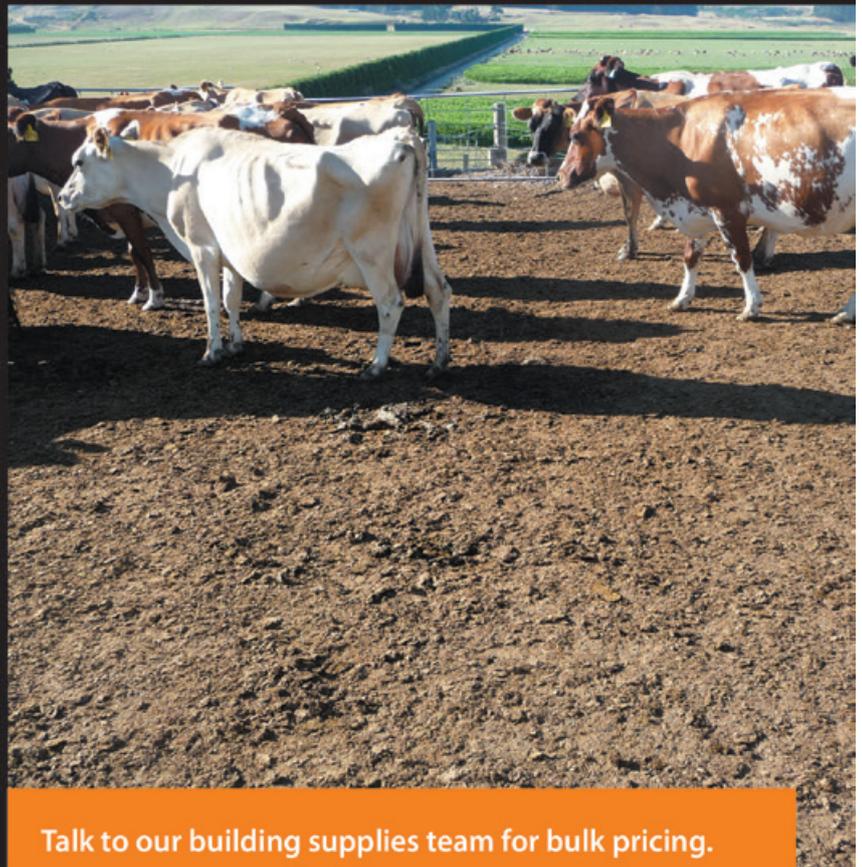
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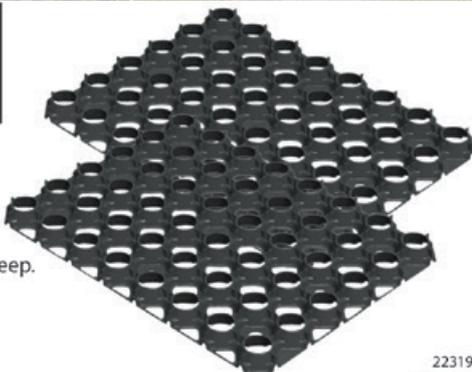


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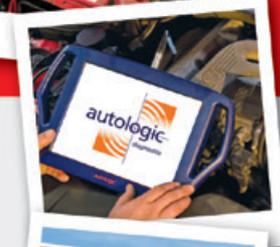
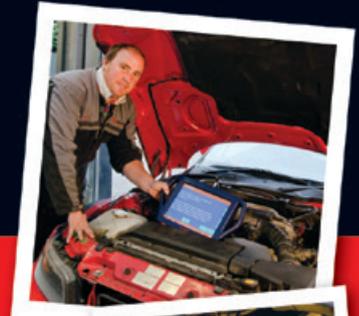
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Maintaining the health of your dairy herd

There is no doubt the current season is a significant challenge for dairy farmers and dairy industry associated stakeholders. The dairy industry is now critical in the Canterbury economy. Supporting dairy farmers is mutually beneficial.

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

Despite the reduced dairy pay out, dairy farms have to keep going; cows have to be fed, milked, kept healthy and will have to be dried off in an effective and cost efficient way this autumn.

Veterinarians remain committed to assisting dairy farmers to maintain the health of their herds. Sick cows or those affected by sub-clinical (unseen) disease will not be effective contributors to production and will be a net cost to the farmer. In days gone by veterinary call outs to individual sick cows were common place. The disease was diagnosed and treated. In many cases the outcome was successful because vets were called out as soon as the animal was noticed to be unwell. More recently there has perhaps been a move away from this individual animal approach, and vets are more involved in a herd-based approach to disease management. This is generally very cost effective. It solves and prevents expensive sub-clinical disease problems which can limit production and also result in significant costs to farmers.

So is the individual animal call out obsolete? This is a difficult question to answer. In some cases the condition may carry a very poor prognosis and, despite expensive interventions, the animal will die or will not resume production. This scenario

has to be avoided at all costs, and veterinary experience is required to make the right decisions. In other situations the condition will be readily treatable, and to not treat these animals or to incorrectly treat them will also be expensive to farmers, because the cost of treatment would have been far less than the lost value of the now poor producing or dead cow.

The message therefore is to continue to use your veterinarian to assist you making good decisions around animal health, especially with the individual cow. The individual animal call out may be one of the more profitable decisions you will make. Make no mistake; if the cow is untreatable your veterinarian will inform you of this.

Veterinarians are independent and impartial professional experts on animal health. We do not have a commercial agenda but have the interests of your optimal animal health foremost in our minds.

Remember all herds are made up of many individual animals, and the low pay out environment is the time when you should be using your vet for complex animal health decisions rather than seeking advice from those claiming to be animal health experts or from those with something to sell.

As autumn approaches, many of you will be thinking about drying off cows. After pregnancy testing is complete you will have an idea of the numbers of cows you will winter and will have to dry off. Don't be tempted to not treat cows at dry off with either an antibiotic or a teat sealant. Last Spring we saw a number of herds with disastrous mastitis levels during calving because the herd was not dried off properly. The cost of clinical mastitis is approximately \$200/case.

I would strongly suggest you arrange at least one but preferably two or three herd tests before dry off. These can be cell count only tests. They will guide you accurately through drying off decisions. During your dry cow consultation your veterinarian will help you make the correct decisions when analysing cell count data. This approach will rationalise treatments. Cows that do not require antibiotics can receive teat sealants alone, and cows that are carrying significant mastitis infections can either be treated with stronger antibiotics, if appropriate, or culled. Blanket dry cow antibiotics may be the most expensive option and many cows treated will not be cured by the antibiotic and they will re-emerge at calving with mastitis. You will have paid to dry off and winter such cows which should have been culled before drying off.

Do not leave cows untreated. They are at significantly increased risk of mastitis.

Dry cow therapy (including teat sealants) is part of an autumn animal health plan which also should include a dry off scan to eliminate empty cows from the herd, tests for copper status and other trace elements, internal and external parasite management, body condition scoring and a solid feeding plan to prepare cows for winter.

Remember also to talk to your vet about transition feeding. The last thing you want this year is sick and dead cows on fodder beet and a high incidence of metabolic disease at calving.

Lastly keep in touch with your vet. We are on your side.

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Dairy's dark days continue

Last year dairy commentators, analysts and even processing companies were upbeat about the prospects of the downturn in dairy prices righting itself by the middle of this year. BY RICHARD RENNIE

The new year did bring some good news for farmers, with welcome rain to some who either had had none in North Canterbury for months, and those further south who had hunkered down expecting El Nino drought conditions.

However there was little to cheer about in dairy payout prospects—the much hoped for bounce in global dairy trade results failed, trailing into yet another run of low or falling price results.

As summer draws to a close, the commentary on dairy returns has started to mention “2017” in possibilities of a recovery, while there is also more discussion about “structural” shifts in the global dairy landscape.

This compares to earlier views that the downturn was simply a cyclical “dip” that commodities experience over time, and therefore likely to recover in relatively short time, possibly even by mid to late this year.

Analysts who have been reticent about expressing their concerns over the direction of New Zealand's dairy industry in the past are now starting to add their voices, and their research, to discussion on where the industry can go from here.

They have taken no satisfaction from viewing a seismic shift in the global dairy landscape, with

farmers here having to adjust to a “new normal” rather than riding out what traditionally may have been a cyclical swing in prices.

Worryingly this new normal may see prices significantly below what the industry would typically have budgeted on only 20 months ago.

Recent work by Massey Professors Danny Donaghy, James Lockhart and Hamish Gow highlighted some of the key shifts occurring.

They describe a “perfect storm” emerging as technology, policy changes and events all conspire in ways to leave no dairy exporting country unaffected.

Their work has identified three key periods in global dairy trade history leading today's situation.

The first was pre 2006 when the European Union and the United States subsidised their producers, resulting in massive overhangs of stored surplus product that would be purchased when prices fell, and sold off as they rose again. Land was also retired to sustainability schemes and taken out of production.

The second period from 2006–2014 had demand for dairy products surging ahead of the world's ability to increase supply, with demand outpacing supply growth by 50–100%.

These were the “golden years” for bulk commodity products like whole milk powder as Asian demand in particular drove up demand. It was however also a more volatile market due to the global financial crisis.

The researchers note that unfortunately a critical assumption from this period was that dairy product prices would continue upwards in a linear fashion.

James Lockhart said he knew of no commodity that would continue to rise in value in real terms. “And there was nothing to suggest dairy products really should be any different to any other commodity.”

The current environment is what the professors call the “third phase” of supply and demand balance. This has been caused by some major changes since 2014, some that are unlikely to reverse in a hurry.

New Zealand's huge surge in dairy growth is part of this.

The 31% increase in milk volume over the past six years has pumped an additional 5 million kg of product a year into a relatively small global dairy trade market that is only 7% of all product produced.



LEFT: Urging farmers not to cut costs that compromises animal health and production
BELOW: Farm Advisor Jeremy Savage who also oversees his family farm business in Takaka



Meantime the well signalled EU shifts in production from quotas being lifted last year have progressed with vigour.

This expansion has focussed firmly on exporting milk powder and infant formula, a space NZ had previously enjoyed a near monopoly over.

Last August ANZ economist Con Williams estimated an additional 600,000t a year of powder capacity would be added to global supply from the EU alone. By this February he believed half that was on stream, with an additional 100,000t capacity dependent upon continuing growth through this season.

Meantime the US is being stimulated by record yields of grain pushing prices down on farmers' major cost. Large scale fracking has also increased oil volumes, lowered the oil price and pushed bio-fuel corn onto the stock food market.

On the demand side, Russia's withdrawal from the EU market has added an unforeseen shock to trade patterns.

But there is a possibility Russia may not wholly return to EU trade as it works with China to develop mega-dairy farms to supply it—there is also an added risk that this development will also result in China becoming a net exporter of dairy product.

Lincoln University Professor of Agri Food Systems Keith Woodford maintains NZ may have to face up to some major re-engineering of its dairy systems, including adopting more year round supply, rather than seasonal, in order to supply a growing demand for extended shelf life dairy products.

Smart farming helps in tough times.

Farm Advisor Jeremy Savage has a strong appreciation of the challenges the low payout environment brings this season and next. He has a portfolio of dairying clients through Canterbury, and also oversees the operation of his family farm business in Takaka.

His clients who will cope best have managed to work with him in reducing their farm working expenses from \$4.30/kg Milk Solids (MS) to \$4.01/kg MS, and eased their stocking rate down by 0.2 cows per hectare (3.5 to 3.3 cows/Ha).

These same operators have experienced on average of 20kgMS a cow increase in production. This has been achieved with greater utilisation of grass, and the same level of supplements as before the shift in numbers.

Jeremy is urging farmers not to cut costs that may compromise cow health and production into next season. For example dropping dry cow treatment, only to have major mastitis issues in spring time that compromise cows' peak production and future in the herd. He also cautions about culling cow numbers too far.

"We have had some high empty rates, typically 16% this year, and some will struggle to keep cow numbers up."

However, for farmers comfortable with numbers for next year, if production is lower than the sale of Fonterra shares maybe an option to provide some welcome cash, along with any surplus cows.

Some farmers are considering wintering cows on fodder beet at home, which could potentially cut

out 20 - 30c/kg MS of expenses. But this will entail a loss of 10% of farm milking area to crop, a corresponding 10% drop in total production "There are a lot of ramifications there, including increase nitrogen losses off the milking platform and the impact on the dairy support and arable farmers which have ably supported the dairy sector for the past three decades."

He is also urging farmers to get smarter with major expenditure items like fertiliser. For example, one client spent \$2,500 soil testing every paddock on their farm, identifying savings of \$25,000 in fertiliser costs by being able to target the right paddocks. Cutting costs also needs to be accompanied with greater monitoring and management to mitigate possible outcomes.

"For example if you drop Teatseal for your heifers, make sure you calve in dry conditions, teat spray them and the use the right feeding to reduce the risk of mastitis."

Virginia Serra, DairyNZ Regional Leader for Canterbury said how drastic farmers have to be in response to the payout is also in part dependent upon their debt level.

Like Jeremy she cautioned about stepping back too far on cow numbers, or risk losing the ability to manage pasture for optimal growth and milk production from the reduced number of cows.

"In some cases people will be keeping their cows at home, but that also has consequences for spring growth, it's not an easy thing to do."

There were more conversations being had between graziers and farmers about wintering prices.

Another cost component being visited was fertiliser application.

"If you have high P levels you may get away with putting less on, but only for a year or two at most."

She cautioned about slicing animal health expenditure back too far, given it was often less than 40c/kgMS of expenditure. She said there is opportunity to opt for cheaper "standard" type treatments over higher cost branded ones, to achieve the same outcomes.

Almost 90% of the farmers she speaks to are aiming to reduce supplement inputs. "But pasture utilisation needs to improve."

For this reason, DairyNZ is putting more emphasis on upskilling a generation of farmers on improved pasture management.

Both Virginia and Jeremy also urge farmers to value the relationships they have, both family and professional, over this tough period.

Jeremy says it can be easy for farming relationships to fracture when costs and contracts are at stake, but they are often relationships worth maintaining and working on for when things improve.

Virginia says taking time with family and friends off the farm is also vital to mentally refresh and appreciate other things in life off the farm.

"The farm is only part of your life—you have hobbies, family, friends and interests that are more important than ever to help you stay healthy mentally, and appreciate life."

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Scott Barrett



Clothing with a purpose

Outside jobs might be great in the summer, but come winter the weather can be mean. BY LINDA CLARKE

Anyone working in the elements needs protection, says Work Outfitters and Elite Embroidery Managing Director Nick Light. His East Street store in Ashburton is well-stocked with warm and water-proof work gear and safety equipment as the season moves from autumn to winter.

Nick and wife Annie also operate Work Outfitters in Timaru, where they have an even larger showroom and warehouse.

They bought Elite Embroidery last year and relocated both staff and hi-tech stitching machines from the Triangle to East Street, where they continue to offer an embroidery and screen-printing service on a huge range of clothing, hats and bags.

Nick said former owner Keith Pickford is still involved in the company two days a week, and all previous logos and designs generated by Elite Embroidery were still available. Staff have years of experience and the latest technology to call on, to produce high quality garments.

Elite Embroidery has been serving the Mid Canterbury community for 20 years and has supplied shirts, caps and jackets to sports teams, school groups, business partners, workmates and tourists. Staff can help customers decide on size and shape of logos, as well as placement and choice of clothing.

Work Outfitters is a one-stop shop for work gear for all shapes and sizes, safety equipment, promotional products, and it also stocks recreational hunting and adventure clothing.

The focus of the company is to offer quality clothing and equipment from well-known brands such as Bisley, Kaiwaka, Carhartt, Blundstone, Norsewear, Line7 and Lynn River. "We want products that people can rely on, and we stand behind all of the products we sell" Nick says.

Farms and other workplaces must comply with health and safety regulations that make high visibility vests and personal protection equipment compulsory, and there is a big range that can be bought in-store, or online and couriered to customers' doors.

An easy-to-navigate website has details about the huge range available, from smaller sized safety vests for women to safety goggles, boots, hydration packs and hard wearing wet weather gear.

"It's good quality gear and doesn't necessarily cost a fortune," Nick said. Staff are also able to provide sound advice, on anything from underpants to Arctic jackets and sunscreen.

He said protective clothing and other equipment needed to be comfortable, practical and long-lasting as well as meet health and safety regulations. Work Outfitters staff can visit customers at their workplaces to assess requirements and offer customised advice.



ABOVE: Managing Director Nick Light operates Work Outfitters in both Ashburton and Timaru
MAIN IMAGE: Work Outfitters in conjunction with Elite Embroidery relocated to a new store on East Street

Work Outfitters also has a range of clothing for vegetable and meat processing factories that meet food hygiene regulations. This includes overalls and aprons, gloves, safety boots, dust masks and respirators safety glasses and goggles, hard hats and hi-vis.

Nick said protective clothing and equipment had to be comfortable and easy to wear or workers would ignore it. And while farmers would be carefully watching their budgets this year, workers' health and safety was still important.

The new Ashburton shop, which will celebrate its first year of operations in June, is part of a new retail complex on the corner of East Street and Grey Street, where there is plenty of off-street parking.



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Turn up the volume

Having trouble hearing the grandkids? Your hearing might not be as good as it once was.

BY LINDA CLARKE



Working around noisy machinery or simply growing old leads to hearing loss, but modern hearing aids can restore the clarity to life, says House of Hearing audiologist Ron Trounson. The latest hearing aids are designed to be discreet; tiny computer processors that can be worn in the ear, or looped behind it. Most people imagine hearing aids as big and clumpy but the technologically-advanced top European-made devices are anything but and can be life-changing. So when should you have a hearing test? If you've over 65, then a test every two years is a good idea, says Ron. If you've worked around a noisy farm or factory machinery, then hearing loss might start sooner. Watch for other signs: Your husband or wife complains "you never listen" or frequently asks you to turn the TV down; you have trouble with children's voices, or hearing in restaurants with background noise.

House of Hearing services a large part of Canterbury, from Ashburton to Christchurch and Rangiora, as well as the West Coast and Blenheim. Their new Ashburton office opened last year and is the first hearing company to commit to Ashburton with a full-time office open five days a week. They offer hearing tests, occupational hearing screening, hearing protection, tinnitus treatment, ear wax removal and a full hearing aid service. They're also

accredited to provide ACC funded audiometric assessments and hearing aids.

Ron said hearing loss was sometimes caused by wax build-up, which was an easy fix. Hearing loss because of damage to the inner organ of hearing was more permanent, but also able to be treated with the help of hearing aids.

The hearing check itself takes about 15 minutes and involves the patient sitting in a sound-proof booth wearing headphones, signalling when they hear sounds.

Ron talks patients through the full range of hearing aids, and makes recommendations about suitable ones. He takes the patient's lifestyle into account, their listening situations and their ability to handle the hearing aids (smaller equals fiddlier).

Today's hearing aids are manufactured to last about six years. "Inside each one is a tiny computer which analyses sound, and a speaker which sends the sound on into the ear. Like computers, the faster more high spec models are more expensive. What kind of performance you



ABOVE: Ron Trounson, Charge Audiologist

LEFT: They offer hearing tests, occupational hearing screening, hearing protection, ear wax removal, tinnitus treatment and a full hearing aid service

need depends on your lifestyle. Most hearing aids work well around home or when watching TV, but at a meeting or in social situations the higher spec ones are better."

While how the hearing aid looks may be a consideration, the price is also an important factor. Ron said all patients are eligible for a \$1000 government subsidy every six years, and can then expect to pay from \$3000 to \$10,000 for a pair of hearing aids, which includes a maintenance care plan for the life of the aids. ACC may also fully fund the cost of a set of hearing aids if it can be shown that noise induced hearing loss happened on the job.

Ron said it could be surprising for some when hearing was restored and most people needed a few months to adapt while their brains remembered all the sounds they have been missing out on.

"Some say they had forgotten what birds sounded like, or the indicators in their car. Your brain does acclimatise."

Ron said he was familiar with issues they might encounter as his mother had dealt with hearing loss from the age of three, and worn a hearing aid for most of her life. He completed a Master's degree in Audiology at Canterbury University in 2012 after 10 years working as a chemical engineer.



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Linseed quietly carves out its niche

The vast patchwork quilt of the Canterbury Plains has long been associated with being the grain growing hub of New Zealand, producing quality crop and seed for the domestic and world markets. Its latitude ensures a year round temperate climate, while the rich soils and accessibility to water is a recipe for successful cropping envied by many outside the region. BY ANITA BODY

There are a growing number of crops which come in and out of favour due to popularity and market trends, and they often come with high input both in time and money, and with potentially high risks. By comparison, there are also a few quiet achievers which have steadily carved out their own niche markets. One such crop is linseed seed, which is harvested for flax seed oil.

The ideal growing conditions within the Canterbury Plains make this region's flax seed oil one of the richest sources of Omega 3 in the world. Typically these crops will return a product with around 60% Omega 3, an Essential Fatty Acid which has a myriad of health benefits including anti-inflammatory properties. Canterbury grown flax seed oil in particular is prized as being of the highest quality.

Following harvest of linseed crops, the oil is extracted from the seed and is used for both human and animal consumption. This can take the form of pure liquid, capsules for the health market, infused oils for the gourmet food sector and animal feed supplements.

Popularity of the oil is growing as it is a richer source of Omega 3 than fish oils, and is especially appealing to vegetarians and vegans, which make up a large percentage of the world's population.

This is a far cry from the linseed products many will remember from decades past. In days gone by, linseed oil was used in oil based paints but this end product bears no resemblance to the high quality food source produced today. It's the quality of the seed and production methods which make all the difference. Oils produced for human and animal consumption are extracted from quality linseed, often by cold pressing, while boiling was the method employed to create a thick animal feed, and low quality oil was used for industrial oil and paints.

Often flax seed and linseed are seen as two different products when in fact they are the one-in-the-same. This is especially true in New Zealand where many incorrectly assume flax seed oil is derived from our native flax plants. Overseas the linseed plant (*linum usitatissimum*) is known as flax, hence the flax seed name.

As with much of the country's agricultural produce, scale limits the quantity of flax seed oil being produced for overseas markets, but that's not stopping local businesses from ensuring New Zealand makes the best quality oil possible. One such producer is Bio Oils, which has almost 30 years of experience in the flax seed market and is now the country's largest producer of cold pressed New Zealand grown flax seed oil and flax seed meal.

The family owned and operated business is based in Ashburton and was originally established in 1987 by a group of seven farmers who had been growing linseed seed for several years, and were interested in the health benefits of flax seed oil and its high Omega 3 content. One of the founding members was Gavin Prebble, and today his son Daryl, along with his wife Debbie, now own and operate the business.

Along with the ideal growing conditions the region offers, Daryl said having non-genetically modified crops is also very important to consumers and the GM free status is a big plus.



ABOVE: Popularity of flax seed oil is growing as it is a richer source of Omega 3 than fish oils

LEFT: The Totally Kiwi infused oils for human consumption

BELOW LEFT: Dave Grants flax seed crop which is harvested and produced by Bio Oils

BELOW RIGHT: Flax seed harvesting in action
OPPOSITE: The beautiful purple flower that appears on this versatile, low input crop

Delivering a product which meets the demands of discerning customers with a desire to know where their food originates from has also led Bio Oils to implement a traceability system which allows end users to pinpoint where the linseed was grown to produce the oil or oil products they are consuming. Their registered tagline for this unique process is 'From Soil to Oil'.

Crops are contracted directly with the farmer by Bio Oils and then monitored throughout the growing process, including photos of individual crops for consumers to see. Once harvested the seed is cleaned at a local seed dressing plant before being delivered to Bio Oils' cold dressing plant, with each grower line being individually cold pressed. Consumers can trace their product by visiting the Bio Oils website and using their "Grower Reference". This is listed on a Certificate of Analysis which accompanies products.

Meeting the mandate for traceability helps secure niche markets for quality products, and Daryl said it has become increasingly popular with overseas customers, and especially the growing Asian market.

Recognising customer requirements has also led to the formation of Totally Kiwi, a subsidiary of Bio Oils which is run by Debbie. Totally Kiwi markets infused oils, ready to use on their own for dipping and drizzling, or as an ingredient in dressings and baking. The oil cannot be used for frying or cooking food.

Daryl said customers wanted a ready-made product, able to be used straight from the supermarket shelf, and creating the infused range has met that demand. Organic oil is also sought by overseas customers, but this is limited by the relatively low number of organically certified growers.

Bio Oils works closely with its farmers, not only to maintain traceability, but also to look at ways of maximising yields and quality of product. An annual crop, linseed is usually planted in September and October and harvested five months later in February or March. Daryl said competition for linseed generally comes from demand for other spring crops such as borage, barley, lupins, processed peas and other brassicas, although it has the advantage of not having cross contamination or isolation (or mapping) issues inherent with other spring crops, making it an attractive alternative.

Arable farmers have described linseed as the "quiet achiever" as it is a safe and reliable option which often meets their crop rotation needs with little additional input.

Growing and harvesting requires no specialised equipment, with every arable farmer likely to have the necessary equipment. "The toughest part is the cutting, but this is quite manageable with conventional equipment," said Daryl.

Returns for linseed are not overly high when

compared to other crops, but the low input often realises a healthy margin, and its reliability provides welcome stability in the often volatile arable market.

Sam Grant and his father Dave farm 550 hectares near Methven and have been supplying Bio Oils with linseed seed for the last three years.

"For us it's a good, low input break crop," said Sam.

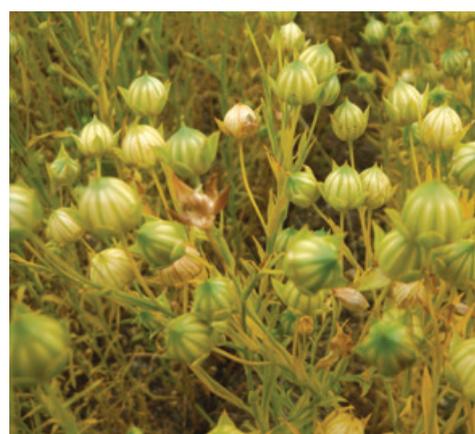
The partnership primarily grows ryegrass and radish for seed, and also provides dairy support and trades lambs. Linseed fits in well with their crop rotation, and is an especially good fit with radishes. "It gets us away from cereal, ryegrass and brassica crops and is ultimately good for soil health."

It has been a versatile crop for the Grants and adaptive to a variety of conditions. This year they have put crops in on irrigated blocks, while in the past they have found it to be a good dryland crop in the corners where the irrigators don't reach.

He said it's not something they would ever put across the whole farm, but it is a pretty safe and low risk option which works well within their farming operation.

The Totally Kiwi infused oils are available for purchase at ATS with your Ruralco Card.

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Out, damned spot

You're better off drinking that glass of sauvignon blanc than pouring it on the red wine your dinner guest just spilled, says Richard McKernan, Owner/Manager of JAE Services Ashburton. BY LINDA CLARKE

Absorbent paper towels are best for soaking up liquids, no matter the colour. Keep blotting and if the stain remains, call JAE Services Ashburton, the restoration company that can work magic.

Richard and wife Tammara have recently purchased JAE Services Ashburton. For both of them it was a decision based around family. They have family in the district and wanted an opportunity to spend more time with them. The flexibility of being in business also allows them to spend more time with their daughter.

Richard worked for JAE Services Christchurch for more than a decade and Tammara has been working in contract management, however both are enjoying returning to an area where community is important.

Their experienced technicians undertake flood and fire restoration work, pest and mould control in addition to carpet and upholstery cleaning.

About 60% of the Ashburton branch's work is carpet cleaning and nearly half of that involves insurance claims for accidental spillage or flooding. In the event of call-outs to restore damage caused by flooding, JAE prefers not to lift wet carpets unless absolutely necessary. Drying them in place reduces shrinkage and means less impact.

Some customers book an annual carpet clean which Richard says is best practice for prolonging the life of a carpet.

"You can spend \$25,000 carpeting your house—if you bought a car for that much money you'd service it regularly. But generally people wait until

there is a problem before getting their carpets cleaned. Grit and sand can wear the pile though, so you will extend the carpet's life."

Children and animals cause most carpet damage, and top of the list is spilled orange or raspberry drinks. The JAE Group has a unique product to deal with these types of stains.

The JAE carpet cleaning process means a deeply-cleaned carpet will be dry in 3-4 hours. Chemicals are not always necessary to remove stains, though Richard and his crew are trained to use a wide range of carefully-tested products designed to shift problem stains. Whether it's wool, synthetic, carpet or rug, JAE has a solution. Fire restoration work is a growing part of the business.

JAE Services Ashburton is also keen to tell people about their pest control service, something that has not previously been offered by JAE in Mid Canterbury. They can provide treatment for a full range of pests and rodents including rats, mice, ants, fleas, cockroaches, wasps and bees, carpet beetle and moths, silverfish, spiders and flies.

Richard said mice and rats might be making their presence felt as the weather cooled. JAE could not only deal with infestations but also offer



ABOVE TOP: JAE receives call outs from all over Ashburton for a range of different cleaning jobs
 ABOVE: About 60% of their work is carpet cleaning, due to accidental spillages and flooding
 MAIN IMAGE: From left, new owners Tammara & Richard McKernan, David Temple & Campbell Duncan

ongoing pest control programmes to avoid reinfestation.

Their pest control products are environmentally friendly, and effective.

The cleaning crew is also currently undergoing training for restoration of crime scenes and P Labs.

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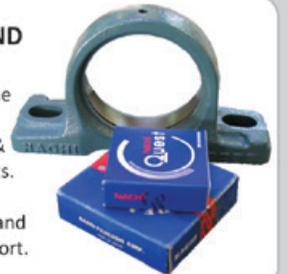
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Maximise your fuel savings

Once upon a time there was very little difference between on-farm fuel deliveries and at the pump purchases, but in today's market that's no longer the case.

BY DON JOSEPH



Depending on your location and your operational needs, there could be substantial savings to be made by making the best choice for your farm or business, and with even more distributors in the market, you need to fully understand just what is being offered.

When it comes to bulk fuel purchases there are many questions to be asked.

- Does the price include delivery?
- How often does the price change?
- Is the offer inclusive of GST?
- How long between ordering and receiving my delivery?
- Is there a minimum order?
- Do we purchase enough to be supplied with fuel storage?
- What does it cost to buy tanks?
- Should we hire equipment?

- What about compliance?
- Am I better to use a fuel card to maximise my savings?

As a Ruralco Cardholder you can talk through these and any other questions to ensure you find the best solution for your needs. Ruralco's buying power and its expertise means you're assured of getting the best deal and best advice.

Using a reliable fuel distributor is an important consideration. Distributors with well co-ordinated delivery systems are more likely to meet all aspects of a customer's requirements, from order through to on-site delivery.

If you live in an area that experiences extremely cold temperatures, don't forget to order winter diesel which has a lower wax content than that supplied throughout the summer months.

A typical delivery usually takes three to four

working days from placing an order. This can be even quicker at times if the driver has local knowledge of a customer's usage and seasonal requirements. If you live in a remote location the delivery time may take longer so you need to ask about ETA's at the time of ordering. Some companies may offer a cheaper price but you may have to wait a lot longer for the delivery, and then find the price has increased since the order was placed.

The price of bulk fuel is set weekly by distributors so keeping up with price movements can save money. And don't forget to make sure the price quoted is GST inclusive and includes delivery. Orders can be placed by email, phone and fax, or through your Ruralco Fuel Sales Manager, who can advise on current pricing trends which remain a little volatile following substantial price drops over the last couple of years.

Since 2014 oil prices have dropped from over \$115.00 a barrel, to as low as \$26.00. Pump fuel prices have dropped 40 cents per litre for diesel and 38 cents for petrol since mid-2015, largely due to falling commodity prices although the fall would have been even lower if it hadn't been for the 28 cents per litre additional tax on petrol applied over the last nine years.

Any savings are good and one way you can do this is to claim back excise tax. If you're a business owner who uses petrol powered equipment, you may be entitled to an excise tax refund of up to 69 cents per litre. This includes farm bikes, mowers, petrol powered generators, chainsaws and other petrol powered equipment used in various types of farming.

To see if, or what exercise tax refund you are entitled to, you can contact Kerry Aldrich at the NZTA (New Zealand Transport Authority) on 06 953 7021 or 0800 108 809 (Ext: 7021).

Bulk fuel doesn't suit everyone's needs, and if you feel this might not be the best option for your farm or business, you can still achieve substantial savings by using fuel cards through Ruralco, the discounts start at 12 ¢ off per litre of petrol or diesel with additional discounts available at selected sites. The cards can be fuel specific or include all your purchases through hundreds of suppliers nationwide. Up-to-date fuel pricing and offers can be found on the Ruralco website at www.ruralco.co.nz.

For more information on Ruralco fuel, contact Don Joseph, Fuel Sales Manager on 0278 397 351 or email don.joseph@ruralco.co.nz

ABOVE: Darren Green with Don Joseph, Fuel Sales Manager for Ruralco

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Tech Tips

BECOME TECH-SAVVY WITH RURALCO'S TOP TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Astutely App

This edition we focus on photo apps.

All apps are FREE and available on Iphone and Android smartphones.



Google photos

The Google Photos app provides a home to organise all your photos and videos, with a searchable function making the images easily accessible in customisable photo albums. All your photos will be backed up in Google Photos, so if anything ever happens to your phone, you can access them on any device at photos.google.com. Plus, have the ability to share instantly, by simply sending a link or create a shared album and invite friends to add photos and you will be notified when new photos are added.



Pic collage

Pic Collage offers the ultimate way to commemorate your recent experience in one image. The app offers a range of collage templates to choose from, you then import your desired photos from your camera roll, social media or web search, choose a filter and Pic Collage will combine the photos to create a funky collage. This app is popular for making personalised products such as magnets or greeting cards.



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The VSCO app provides a premier way to shoot, edit and share your photographs. You will have the ability to edit the exposure, temperature, contrast, cropping, straightening and clarity then save it to your VSCO grid or any other social media.

You can also browse the grid which showcases exceptional images from around the globe.



PicFlow

PicFlow is an app which allows you to mix your photos & music and create a unique video. Select multiple photos from your camera roll, drag and drop to rearrange photos, swipe and pinch photos to get the right crop, add music from your library and choose from over 18 photo transitions. Once your video creation is finished you have the ability to export it and share on Social Media.

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5. Book your vehicle as usual and the price generated at the end will be your Ruralco Cardholder pricing.

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Googles Android is taking over, it's in everything including televisions, and like all code it is subject to compromise, however because of it's popularity it is an especially big target to bad people with nefarious purpose who can access the information on your phone, tablet or television. These devices are (with the exception of your 55 inch TV) are highly portable and now well connected. Their portability issue means they are easily stolen or lost (along with what feels like your life). Consideration needs to be given to the security of your device.

1. Lock Your Screen

Putting a pin or swipe code on not only keeps the kids at bay but also deters the bad guys.

2. Lock your Apps

As a second level of defence you can lock some applications like email, banking or any other data driven app.

3. Do not auto-save passwords

Passwords can be a pain but they are essential to protect your device and information stored on it.

4. Public Wifi networks

Free internet is great isn't it? Yes, if you are causally browsing but no if you are doing anything personal. If you are using free Wi Fi to browse You Tube then go ahead fill your boots but when it comes to secure stuff like banking, switch to using your phones data for those tasks.

5. Security App

In the old money a"virus guard", short story you need one to watch your back, a free one generally is like the other free apps, it's not free they want something from you.

6. BACKUP BACKUP

BACK UP, BACK UP. I think I said that already but I will say it again BACKUP.

Put it in the cloud, put it on your computer but BACKUP.

Google offers its own backup service with your google account, because they made android and it's how they make their money, it's a good service, the other choice is to use the service provided by the device manufacturer they also offer an account that will synchronise your Android in to the cloud. Use either one you choose but do use one.

7. Remote Wipe

Enable the ability to remote wipe your device. It is the equivalent of cancelling your credit cards but you get to push the button. If you would like more advice on how to protect your device please get in touch, our team are always happy to help.

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You will need a Ruralco website login to view discount information.

Farm Safety—fundamental to operating a good business

Today's farmers and land owners are required to actively manage all aspects of health and safety around the farm. The new Health & Safety at Work Act comes into force 4th April 2016. To assist with this process ATS can provide members with access to a farm safety manual and relevant training. Upon completion of the training, members can also apply for a discount on their ACC levies.

Training dates for 2016 are the 22 March, 19 April, 24 May and 21 June at a cost of \$550 (GST and member discount inclusive). Seating is limited so get in fast. For more information or to reserve your spot please contact Peter Jacob on 03 307 5124 or 0800 BUY ATS (289 287), email book@ats.co.nz or reserve your spot online at www.ats.co.nz/farmsafety.

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Looking for fuel storage tanks?

ATS have fuel storage tanks available to be purchased for your business. Tanks can be ordered and delivered on farm in a wide range of sizes to meet your requirements with the tank arriving fully tested and ready for use. Contact ATS on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) to organise fuel storage for your business.

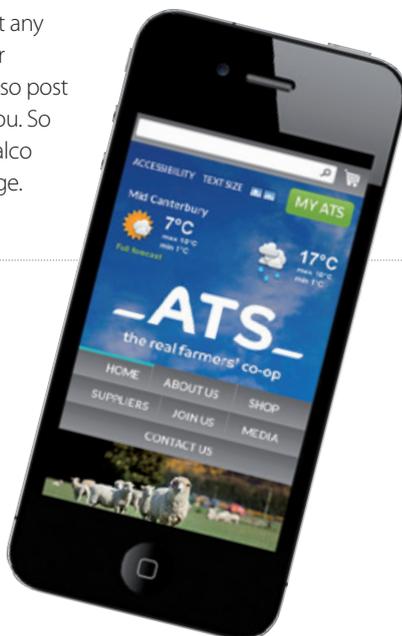


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If you get caught on camera by the Ruralco team at any events, you will be able to find those photos on our Facebook page www.facebook.co.nz/ruralco. We also post the latest publications and any exclusive deals to you. So stay in the loop by liking the Ruralco page and Ruralco posts will then appear on your Facebook home page.

Your mobile weather forecast

Need your weather forecast on the go? Be sure to visit the ATS website www.ats.co.nz which can easily be viewed from your mobile phone via your My ATS login.



Winner of 1000L of bulk fuel

The lucky winner of our bulk fuel competition at the Southern Field Days was Gerald Kidner, an arable farmer in Rakaia. He will receive 1000L of bulk fuel, delivered on to his farm by Allied Petroleum, free of charge. Gerald is pictured above with Don Joseph, Ruralco's Fuel Sales Manager, receiving his certificate.

Hazlett Rural Ltd (HRL) Sales Report



Once a week Ruralco sends out HRL's weekly market report via email, this gives an insight to sheep and beef prices and has a record of stock at the Coalgate Sale yards.

This is only sent to those cardholders who have opted to receive this. If you would like to be ahead of the game, email us at ruralco@ruralco.co.nz and we will add you to the list of recipients.

Sort your autumn seed requirements now

February is a good time to talk to the ATS Seed team about your pasture seed options and to seek advice on what to sow now. It is also a good time to look at short-term ryegrass options for growing quick feed and to sow forage cereals. To secure your seed supplies at great early season prices from ATS Seed, contact the team today or your ATS Arable and Pastoral Representative on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

Are you, a family member or friend getting married?

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Resetting your Ruralco Card PIN Number

If you have forgotten your PIN or want to change your PIN on your Ruralco Card, simply contact Ruralco on 0800 787 256 (RURALNZ), they can wipe your current PIN. Once your PIN has been wiped & reset, you can spend on the Ruralco Card as usual, the EFTPOS terminal will ask "Sign or PIN"; choose PIN and enter a four digit number of your choice. The EFTPOS terminal will remember the number you choose and it will remain your PIN to be used at all Ruralco Suppliers in the future.



Have your say

Is there something that you want to share your opinion on? Something we need to discuss in Real Farmer? Have your say, contact us at marketing@ruralco.co.nz and share your point of view. If you wish to have an article written in the Real Farmer by our journalist or if you simply want to provide the article, contact us and we will organise for you to have your voice.



Entries open for United Wheat Growers annual competition

United Wheat Growers are proud to be holding its annual wheat growing competition in 2016 with the support of ATS. Entries close 31 May 2016, so remember to get your entries in quick. Entry details are on the ATS website at www.ats.co.nz, www.uwg.co.nz or for more information email George Walker at george.walker@ats.co.nz.



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