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AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2016

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circle at Paratiho

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demands a
second look

Paddock
to plate

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a highlight for
farmers

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recognition for
winners



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Real discounts for real farmers



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ON THE COVER:

David and Kate McEwen from Paratiho

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Coming full circle at Paratiho

For many people choosing to farm, heading back to do it on the family farm is often the ultimate fulfilment of their career. For Nelson farm manager Dave McEwen it took a few years to get back home, but now he's there he's hoping he and his wife Kate will be able to stay for a few more yet.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY DAVID LETSCHE

Dave and wife Kate manage the stunning Paratiho property, located only minutes from Motueka in the sun trap that is the top of the South Island. Today the property is on the market for \$20 million as its present owners assess their options in their later years.

The couple are well into their fourth year managing the property which David could once claim as home, thanks to a lucky draw his father made back in the early eighties.

"Dad had tried many times to get a farm through the old Lands and Survey ballot system. Time was running out for him because your eligibility was based on your age. Each time he had been the fifth person for four farms in each draw, but the last time he entered, he was awarded Paratiho, and that became his first farm.

"He also finally got what he believed was the best farm out of all the ballot properties he has tried for." It was also one of only two ballot farms ever offered in the Nelson district.

Paratiho's well balanced spread of flats, rolling and steeper hill country spread evenly across 340ha meant it provided plenty of opportunity for his father to spread the income and make the most of the opportunity he had been given.

The farm was in rough condition, stock was in poor health, it needed extensive re-grassing, and paddocks required more subdivision and care to the fencing.

And like many farming families in the mid-eighties they were also hit by a massive shift in the rules and conditions never experienced before in New Zealand.

"The government basically changed the rules around how we were classified, along with many other rules that changed under Rogernomics."



Dave McEwen and his wife Kate manage the stunning Paratiho property



Charolais bloodlines introduced under their management, with good killing sheet results testimony to the additional weight the Charolais genetics have bought.

“But retaining that Angus blood line as maternal means they can still take a bit of a check if feed conditions tighten.”

Meantime Paratiho also runs almost 200 head of deer, putting a terminal sire of Wapiti-Red cross to the hinds, with leased stags used.

“All the deer progeny are sold for processing, with our replacement hinds coming from Peel Forest estate every year, bought in in-fawn. It’s a pretty simple approach, we have gone from a property that used to sell fawns to a finishing property, and that is the case for all the stock now.”

It has meant the 77ha of irrigated flat country has proven invaluable for growing feed crops through winter and autumn. This has included Pasja to finish the lambs on in autumn, before re-grassing with Sonic grass and red-white clover mix sown with chicory and plantain.

“We are expanding our finishing area every year.

The results are starting to show. Over the last farming year we finished nearly 3,500 prime lambs to heavy carcass weights. When we first came we only finished just over 1,900 in our first year.”

David and Kate have built strong links with their bosses, staff and suppliers whilst at Paratiho.

Decisions on purchasing and supplies have come back to strong relationships they have enjoyed from past management jobs, and that includes using Ruralco for supplies.

David attributes the excellent relationship he has enjoyed with acting chief executive Rob Sharkie for sticking with the company as his preferred supplier.

“The Whitsons wanted me to draw on the skills of the people I knew when they took us on. Rob was

They shifted to be classified as a “freehold” property, from the balloted “leasehold” definition, a shift that resulted in interest rates ramping up to over 20% per annum.

David’s parents got through the worst of it, then decided to take up the offer made by a businessman who had been keen to buy the farm.

“He had literally only driven up the drive the day after Mum and Dad had decided to move to North Otago and take advantage of cheaper land prices there, so it seemed like it was meant to be.”

He says it was tough in some ways to see the farm go, but it lacked the opportunity to expand at that time, and even in those days Nelson’s higher land values meant cashing up for another farming region was the best option to expand.

A series of jobs managing hill and high country stations throughout the South Island over the years mean there are few districts in the tussock country Dave and Kate are not familiar with, even placing them at the island’s most nor’westerly tip at the top of the West Coast.

“Family life there with a couple of young children aged two and five at the time really was fantastic. We had six kilometres of coast line and it was quite a change from the high country we had experienced!”

After a long stint managing Rainbow station in the Nelson region, Dave and Kate had decided it would be time to step down off the high remote country and be somewhere nearer civilisation.

“That country with its contour and its cold is pretty tough on the body, as good as it is working there, you know you can only work in it for so long before you start to feel it”

They had also vowed to work for a business investor in a sheep and beef unit.

“We always appreciated the approach business operators took to owning and running a sheep and beef farm—they understood the value of doing the job once and doing it right, and investing up front to get the full potential out of a farm. It makes the job of managing a lot more rewarding.”

So the opportunity to manage his old home farm for owners Sir Keith and Lady Whitson was as serendipitous as the offer by a businessman to buy Paratiho off Dave’s father all those years before.

“It was not only a place I knew well, but they were very keen to have people managing it who could bring in some changes to lift the farm’s production and fulfil that potential they saw in it.”

By this stage the Whitsons had owned Paratiho for four years, having made a luxurious lodge on the farm their home.

Originally the Paratiho Lodge had been built as a high end retreat for wealthy clients seeking a private holiday sanctuary, including the likes of Microsoft’s Bill Gates.

Under David and Kate’s management the farm’s sheep breed shifted from a five-way composite to a Romney-Texel cross to deliver a more robust animal and higher yielding carcass. “But I would also consider moving back to a modern Romney, or even Perendale—the going gets tough on the hill country when it dries out, and they can take the check in feed levels and still perform well!”

The Angus breeding herd has had

ABOVE: The Angus breeding herd has had Charolais bloodlines introduced under the McEwens management

BELOW: The farms sheep breed shifted to a Romney-Texel cross to deliver a more robust animal and higher yielding carcass





one of those people, he would always try to meet the needs of his clients in whatever position he has had in the rural sector."

Dave and Kate are enjoying building relationships between Paratiho and the community in other ways too. This includes opening the farm up for trainee students to spend time following the farming calendar, and for school children to get a taste of country life. They also remain excited about what more can be done on the farm itself.

Looking out at the future for Paratiho, they say they would love to stay working for its new owners if the property sells. It has a strong sentimental attachment for David, but he can also see the potential that exists to lift its productivity even further.

"I think with some additional fertiliser inputs we can lift our feed production even further—it can be a tough place after Christmas when it can dry out pretty fast, so spring production is critical.

"For us, we have always taken the view to look after the farm and the stock as if they are our own, it's been good for us and we think we have been good for it."

ABOVE: The lodge was originally built as a high end retreat for wealthy clients seeking a private holiday sanctuary

TOP: David McEwen with his right hand man Luke McIver who is in the 2IC Shepherd role



Axe's flight has sharp appeal

As a boy, if Dave McEwen ever went missing at an A & P show, his mother knew where to find him. It would inevitably be over at the wood chopping site, and he would be watching entranced as the competitors chopped against each other, raining sweat and wood chips to the cheering crowd.

"I think it was that mix of adrenaline, the danger of it and the speed those guys had, it just used to draw me back each time," he says.

It would be some years before David picked up an axe to compete himself, having got some instruction from a station handyman in the later eighties on how to combine strength with technique to really master a competitive axe competition.

He competed through his early twenties, only to give it away once the demands of family and station managing grew, but the sport never lost its appeal to him.

But family and farm demands and even back surgery have not put him off returning to the axe ring. It only took some encouragement from a Golden Bay possum trapper to get him back there at the local show.

While he downplays his talent as "average run of the mill" his participation and role in the sport says much more.

Dave has participated in South Island teams, competing from Riverton to Golden Bay at many of the local A & P shows, also competing in the North Island and across the Tasman in Dubbo, New South Wales. He has represented the Nelson region in competitions, is President for Nelson and vice President the South Island Axemens' Association, and is NZ President of the association.

"I guess you could say I almost fall into the category of 'silly old bugger' but in truth I am probably what we would have called a 'classic' (50 years old and over).

As a sport, the number of participants may not be what they used to be, with time pressure and the expense of being equipped with the right axes which can be worth \$800.00 each.

"But we do have eight new juniors in the South Island, including two brothers here in Nelson."

Meantime David has no plans to ease back on his own competitive efforts.

"I think I will keep going as long as I enjoy it and the back holds up, at present it feels better for it"

Welcoming a new era

Collectively, the team are focused on best meeting the needs of their 20,000 (and steadily growing) nationwide base of cardholders.



It's not just about meeting the immediate needs and requirements of cardholders, but also about assessing the overall outcomes they are looking to attain and supplying the knowledge and expertise necessary to ensure these are met.

While farmers are currently facing challenging times, there were still many success stories. For me and the team at Ruralco, it is great to be part of those success stories. No matter where in New Zealand farmers are based, we have a business with the soul, and the smarts, to help keep the sector building on the value it brings to our economy.

This is ably achieved by accessing a growing network of more than 2,500 supplier businesses

delivering a wide range of advice, products and services throughout New Zealand. These suppliers are carefully selected for the quality and expertise they offer, and all have proven track records in their particular fields. Each provides meaningful discounts (generally around 10 to 40 percent) to cardholders. Part of Ruralco's success following its launch three years ago, has been its ability to grow with minimal overheads. The business makes excellent use of the latest technology allowing any farmer from anywhere in New Zealand access to the best deals and expertise on offer through its supplier network. The investment in technology over recent years and the absence of



"bricks and mortar" often needed for expansion, means Ruralco is now well positioned for wider growth in the rural supplies sector.

The business also has a reputation for being quick to respond to farmers' needs and requirements, and to the ever-changing and demanding rural supplies and service marketplace. This agility and nimbleness is a great advantage when it comes to future growth and expansion, and is especially useful during the challenging times currently being experienced by many in the rural sector.

Ruralco is part of the farmer owned co-operative ATS. It is run by a Board of six farmers and one independent director, who collectively bring both experience and youthful diversity to the boardroom table. Of these directors, only two have had more than five years on the Board, and three of the group are women. This combination ensures Ruralco delivers on the long-held outcome of lowering costs for farmers, while also keeping



in-step with the latest trends and technology. This shift away from the traditional make-up of a Board can be partly attributed to the changing face of agriculture which now has a large number of talented and energetic young people in its rank—people who are passionate about their sector and are keen to be part of a business which is forward thinking while still staying close

to its grass roots of supporting farmers. The recent management changes have provided both the Board and management the opportunity to further evaluate Ruralco's business model and make tweaks and changes where necessary. This exciting opportunity has been made possible thanks to the current strength of the business, and

allows for further innovation, lateral and forward thinking to occur in what promises to be exciting times.



Rob Sharkie

ACTING GROUP CEO
robert.sharkie@ats.co.nz
027 801 9929

Recently appointed Acting Group CEO, Rob Sharkie is very well known within the South Island rural community and a respected member of the ATS/Ruralco team. He has an unparalleled background in the farming service industry, including both livestock and rural supplies. His resume includes roles at HRL (Hazlett Rural Ltd), CRT, and PGG Wrightson and his wealth of knowledge, experience and personable approach has made him popular with staff and cardholders alike. These skills have also added valuable depth to the company's leadership team.

Changes at the helm of Ruralco have created the perfect platform for the business to enter a new era.

The recent departure of long serving chief executive Neal Shaw, although a loss to Ruralco, has provided the opportunity to build on the business's well established solid foundation, so it can be taken to the next level in what is currently a demanding and competitive rural supplies and service environment.

As a business, we are exceptionally well positioned to keep moving ahead, and I am particularly well supported by an experienced and committed team, which includes the following personnel.



Oliver O'Neill

RURALCO GM
oliver.oneill@ats.co.nz
027 838 7703

As Ruralco General Manager, Oliver O'Neill heads Ruralco's dedicated team working to expand and support the Ruralco Card offer nationwide with the best possible discounts for cardholders while increasing market share. His role is two-fold, split between Group Financial Controller ensuring the numbers stack up and his Ruralco GM role.



Don Joseph

FUEL SALES MANAGER
don.joseph@ruralco.co.nz
027 839 7351

Backed by more than 30 years' experience in the oil industry, Don Joseph is Ruralco's Fuel Sales Manager. Don's primary role is to ensure an extensive network of service stations are available nationwide, making it easy for Ruralco Cardholders to fuel up anywhere. Part of his role involves ensuring Ruralco Cardholders get the best possible deals at the pump, with on-farm bulk fuel, and fuel equipment supplies, for both farmers and businesses.



Jono Pavey

PROCUREMENT MANAGER
jono.pavey@ats.co.nz
027 565 9669

With extensive agribusiness experience and correspondingly strong networks within the sector, Jono Pavey is well positioned to fulfil his responsibilities as Procurement Manager. He is responsible for the selection and management of retail supplier relationships, inventory responsibilities for our ATS farm supply stores, and margin management. Jono understands farming's seasonal demands and this ensures we offer ever-improving ranges of products from the highest quality suppliers and can deliver to Ruralco Cardholders nationwide.



Lester Chambers

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER
lester.chambers@ruralco.co.nz
027 707 8120

As Ruralco's National Sales Manager, Lester Chambers is charged with managing Ruralco's dedicated partnership services team and handling key supplier accounts. Lester and his team work hard to ensure the businesses they bring on board as suppliers provide the best possible discounts for our cardholders across the country.

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Why should we focus on Health & Safety?

Health & Safety is an area that over recent years, coupled with other compliance costs, is all too often associated with high cost and little return on investment.

WORDS BY JANE FOWLES, COMPLIANCE PARTNERS, IMAGE BY SAFERFARMS.ORG.NZ

Although not always easily measured or tangible, there is a direct link between health and safety on your farm or in your business to your people, their productivity, and their commitment. So why should we focus on health & safety?

We have to

Last year, 20 people were killed in workplace accidents on farms. That's more than the number that died in forestry, construction and manufacturing combined. Each of these deaths, and many of the non-fatal injury incidents were preventable (WorkSafe NZ).

Under the new Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 every farm or business must adhere to its responsibility to keep its workers safe and healthy while they're at work. This responsibility is an ongoing commitment to your duty of care for all workers.

WorkSafe NZ was set up in late 2013. A Crown Entity, they're the enforcer of the new legislation. Their goal? To achieve a 25 percent reduction by 2020 of the workplace death and injury toll—by enforcing and working collaboratively (WorkSafe NZ).

So the first reason we need to focus on health and safety is simple, we have to.

We want to

The second reason is far more compelling. Fit and healthy people are a critical factor for

successful farming and business. In 2013 around 1 in 5 agricultural workers (over 21,000 people) made a farming-related injury claim to ACC, at a cost of over \$26 million. Some of those injuries will keep costing for several years. Over 2,100 injuries caused more than 5 days off work, and those people alone represent over 175,000 days of lost or limited productivity - these were just the injuries that were reported and accepted (WorkSafe NZ).

By choosing to embed a solid culture of health and safety you take your employment relationship a step further—you commit to ensuring your team are as important to you as the people they go home to at the end of the day.

Health & Safety isn't about writing a manual and then dusting it off every now and then—it should be the way that we do things every day. There are a number of benefits from health and safety that make a direct impact on your farm or in your business:

- Good health and safety practices leads to fewer injuries which enables your farm or business to keep working. We all know when a member of the team is away it leads to increased stress and fatigue for the employer and other members of the team, subsequently resulting in more injuries or mistakes;

- Safer workplaces lead to better retention of your team, improved recruitment and enhanced reputation—steps to becoming an employer of choice and thus avoiding expensive replacement and retraining costs;
- Fewer injuries means reduced down time—especially with machinery and processing times;
- A positive workplace with open communication about health and safety leads to trust and confidence being built between employer and employees which in turn increases morale and job satisfaction;
- Increased overall health and wellbeing—this means fewer sick days and a healthier team;
- And by demonstrating you take the health and safety of everyone on your farm seriously, you may also qualify for a Workplace Safety Discount on your annual ACC levy.

The World Health Organisation describes the link as a circle of 'improved conditions of work will lead to a healthier work force, which will lead to improved productivity, and hence to the opportunity to create a healthier, more productive workplace'. So, although not easily measured—surely it can be agreed that the cost of not doing health and safety definitely outweighs the cost of doing it? Everyone has the right to go home at the end of each working day.



DAN COSGROVE

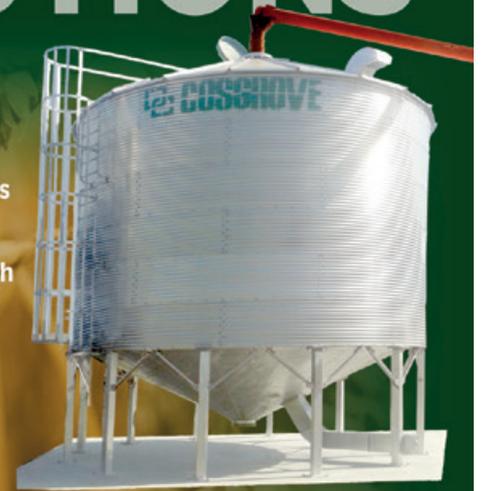
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Tanks that stand the test of time

Fuel tank experts Nymic are proud their Kiwi-made tanks are helping farmers and contractors save money and meet tough new health and safety rules at the same time.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGE BY AMY PIPER

Nymic (Which stands for 'not yet made in China') is a Christchurch-based engineering company that has been providing on-farm fuel tanks for farmers in the South Island since 2007, and before that as John Russel engineering since the early 1990s.

They offer farmers, on-farm fuel tanks for all their needs and have recently put together a lease package for farmers who may not have the volumes to allow a fuel company to supply a tank—but allows them to become compliant with their fuel storage system on-farm in the face of sterner WorkSafe regulations.

"All our designs are engineered to meet HSNO requirements and come with a TNK number approved by ERMA (WorkSafe) and are manufactured by ourselves - an approved fabricator," said Nymic owner Gavin Barr.

New health and safety laws that came into effect earlier this year mean the storage of petrol and diesel must be compliant with WorkSafe regulations.

"Some of the more obvious issues are old leaky tanks or tripod tanks which shouldn't be currently in use but are still being used," Gavin said. "There will be issues surrounding these getting filled by your fuel provider down the

track. Also there can be issues with these tanks and proper access for refuelling.

"The other main issue can be separation distances from buildings or waterways for storage based on both the size and style of tank being used."

Farmers can check their level of compliance on WorkSafe's website and seek straight forward advice from Nymic.

Leasing a tank is a practical alternative to buying one. "Leasing removes at least the headaches of having compliant fuel storage on your farm for a small tax deductible monthly cost. We can advise you on your location requirements as well and we will undertake ongoing maintenance as required and build in the cost of a new filter yearly as part of the lease," Gavin said.

Lease times are a minimum of 12 months (if you're moving around) and there is no upfront cost of purchase on a depreciating asset. "Your needs may change as time goes on and you

ABOVE: [Leasing a fuel tank from Nymic is a practical alternative to buying one](#)

can simply let us know and we will remove the old tank and supply a different size or combination."

Gavin said Nymic was proud of its New Zealand-made tanks, which were made in its Christchurch engineering facility by approved welders. "We produce compliant tanks that are tested and stand the test of time. Our prices are competitive with any import and you are supported by the local manufacturer. Any problems, we deal with them."

Nymic's tanks are not just for farms. They provide a lot of the newer storage tanks on skifields around Canterbury and further south. They also do a lot of general engineering, from truck ramps to spiral staircases, and structural jobs for both residential and commercial clients; their largest job to date being the fabrication and erection of a five-storey apartment block in Christchurch.



Nymic Engineering
9 Kilonan Place, Wigram Park,
Christchurch
03 341 1160

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An eating routine makes for a healthy rumen

Each year I am amazed at how quickly the seasons roll around. I am sure time speeds up as we get older.

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

As you read this, calving will be underway once again. To me it seems like only yesterday that I was heading out in the dark and cold to calve another cow.

Calving can be both challenging and very rewarding. Planning and organization will in most cases make the days more pleasant. Make sure everybody has clear instructions as to what they are expected to do, and how they are expected to do it. So many times I have been on farms late at night when cows are still being milked simply because "it all went to custard today". If you have to turn around and do things for somebody who should have done the job properly in the first place, you need to sit down and have a long discussion.

Cows also need to be organized. They like routines. They also like to be fed in a uniform way; consistent quantity, quality and timing all makes for a healthier rumen.

As cows "close up" and approach calving pay special mind to magnesium requirements. Magnesium is the cornerstone of milk fever control. Dusting is a good way to supplement magnesium but there can be a great deal of

wastage. A great deal more has to be offered over what is required to allow for this wastage. Keep energy levels in the diet as high as possible. This is important to facilitate the absorption of magnesium and it will also ensure compensation is made for the cow's significant reduction in voluntary feed intake as calving approaches. This negative energy balance, if it occurs, drives the development of ketosis which is a major problem in cows after calving.

After calving, calcium becomes important. It is drained from the cow in large quantities in colostrum. Cows enter negative calcium balance. Because calcium is so important for muscle function, cows with "milk fever" literally collapse. Big cows need plenty of calcium to get them up.

When assisting cows to calve, be clean, gentle and know the limits. If you can't be sure how the calf is presenting or you are unable to deliver the calf in 10 minutes with moderate traction please don't hesitate to contact your veterinary clinic.

There is good research now that supports the fact that calves picked up twice daily have better passive transfer of colostrum antibodies, and the

cows get less mastitis, especially if they are milked within 12 hours of calving. Their first milking colostrum is much better quality, and this is why calves do better.

Teat spraying colostrum cows before they are milked is ok as long as you are not supplying colostrum to the dairy factory. This will help reduce the bacterial load in to the milking machines. Mix all teat sprays according to manufacturers instructions, and please make sure every side of every teat of every cow is covered at every milking.

Cows that develop mastitis should be milked twice daily even if they are only being treated once daily. This will improve mastitis cure rates. Using milk culture information along with antibiotic sensitivities will help make rational antibiotic decisions and improve cure rates.

If more than 2% (2 in every 100 cows calved) of cows calving are getting retained placenta you should seek assistance from your veterinarian. Retained placenta greatly reduces conception rate.

This season I urge you to be more aware of using prescribed antibiotics and other antimicrobials like teat sprays and disinfectants more responsibly. Use them only as instructed by your vet, use the full course at the correct dose intervals and use products that are highly likely to be effective. This season please take the time to sit down with your vet and plan how you will manage post calving health and cow condition, and your approach to mating the herd to achieve high performance in a shorter time frame.

As always your veterinary practice will be only too happy to assist.

Enjoy this very rewarding time of the year.



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Your water tight compliance solution

Water meter compliance can cause headaches for farmers who are trying to keep track of their water allocation.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY WATERFORCE

Irrigation leaks, pump issues and water meter problems can all play havoc with your data, putting you at risk of consent breaches and costing valuable time to sort out.

Recent news reports around water meter compliance in Canterbury indicate that many issues stem from faulty equipment. Consent holders who aren't monitoring their data often aren't aware there's a problem until the council issues a fine or formal warning.

WaterForce in partnership with WaterCheck now offers a nationwide service called 'WaterCheck Assist' which makes it easy to keep up to date with, and understand, your compliance data.

It helps consent holders detect any issues so they can be quickly fixed, and ensures farmers are getting the best out of their irrigation system in the process.

WaterCheck spokesman Nathan Case says a hardware device is installed on farm to collect data from a range of sensors including water meters, well levels, pipe pressures, pump faults and soil moisture. That data is then uploaded to WaterCheck servers via the cellular network.

Based on the data gathered, clients who opt for the additional WaterCheck Assist service are then offered two convenient options to take the hassle and worry out

of compliance—personalised reports and personalised alerting.

"Our personalised report service can include a weekly phone call to discuss the previous week's data. Our experts will prepare a PDF summary report and talk about your data with you to ensure you understand what is required to stay compliant, make sure your monitoring system is operating correctly, and to discuss any breaches and help you resolve these with your local council," Nathan explains.

"We also talk through any questions you may have, and afterwards we can email you the report for your records along with notes on any concerns that were discussed."

This weekly analysis enables farmers to detect things such as irrigation leaks, pump issues and water meter issues quickly. The service is designed to assist farmers not only with compliance but also water management.

"Our personalised alerting system means that in the event that you breach consent or a major fault is detected with your system, you will be notified by a phone call from an actual person who will have already analysed the issue and be able to discuss with you what is required to either fix it, or follow up any compliance issues with the council on your behalf.

ABOVE: Waterforce and Watercheck now offer 'Watercheck Assist' which makes it easy to keep up with and understand your compliance data

The close relationship between WaterForce and WaterCheck will ensure a local service technician can be on farm quickly with up to date details to support the service repair work.

"You can list up to three phone numbers for us to contact you on. If we are unable to reach you after several attempts, we will either leave you a voice message or send you a text about the alert.

These two services are intended to be used together as a more complete compliance solution. WaterCheck Assist helps consent holders detect and fix issues quickly, avoiding potential fines or warnings, and is ideal for those who prefer to avoid computers, are busy running their business or who want to talk to someone knowledgeable on compliance. Farmers can receive and discuss the information in a weekly phone conversation instead.

WaterCheck Assist does not share your data with anyone else. All information is kept secure, and is only made available to the customer.

"This is an ideal, cost-effective way to easily manage your compliance data and keep on top of your usage and any problems before they turn into major headaches."

For more information, please contact your local Waterforce branch on 0800 436723 or WaterCheck on 06 876 5391.

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GM potential demands a second look

As housing issues, particularly Auckland's, never seem to leave the national headlines it is hard to believe 15 years ago genetic modification (GM) occupied media attention almost as much as those houses do today.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY RICHARD RENNIE

In fact GM ended up becoming an election issue in 2002, with very public, and often bitter debate filling headlines for weeks on end. But ultimately the GM debate seemed to fade away. A 2001 Royal Commission ruling New Zealand should keep a "watching brief" on the technology, and not dismiss it altogether as a means of advancing our food production ability.

Fifteen years on there is pressure to revisit the careful, thoughtful and cautionary findings of the commission. That pressure has increased in the last few weeks after more than 100 Nobel Laureate scientists wrote an open letter urging Greenpeace to revisit its stance on GM, and particularly on Golden Rice.

Golden Rice is a genetically modified brand of rice fortified with additional vitamin A, a

deficiency which kills over 600,000 children aged under five a year.

It contains up to 23 times the amount of vitamin A containing beta-carotene of typical rice, and last year was awarded a Patent for Humanity award from the US patent and trademark office.

Greenpeace has long campaigned against GM organisms on grounds the possible impact of GM crops interbreeding with non GM crops. It maintains GM organisms will create "genetic pollution" that interferes with natural biodiversity, and also leaves farmers vulnerable to companies holding patents to those particular seeds.

But in the letter the scientists urge Greenpeace to drop its opposition to Golden Rice in particular, given the huge positive

impact it is having upon malnourished people the world over.

The scientists went so far as to ask how long this opposition would be tolerated before it could be considered a crime against humanity. The open letter has strong support from Canterbury farmer, doctor and Federated Farmers president Dr William Rolleston.

In a region like Canterbury where the full spectrum of primary production is covered from high value seed production to intensive dairying, he is intensely conscious of how GM advances could bring significant shifts in production capability and productivity to the region.

He also agrees the time has come to revisit the Royal Commission's cautious conclusion from almost 15 years ago, given the significant advances in genetic engineering over that period.

Dr Rolleston said the science is becoming much more defined from earlier GM work that included “trans-genetics” where genes from one organism were effectively transplanted into the genes of another.

However rapidly advancing genetic technology now includes gene editing, where specific genetic code on an organism’s DNA is added or deleted without introducing genetics from another source, and without impacting upon other genetic traits.

“Research is already translating to improved food products now available to consumers.”

The latest technology is known as CRISPR, a clumsy acronym for a complex definition—“clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats”.

Put more simply, CRISPR essentially provides “enzyme scissors” to make cuts on the DNA strand at very specific points. The rapidly evolving technology has enabled scientists to take some obscure work on bacteria’s ability to gain immunity to viral infections, to now be at the absolute cutting edge for altering an organism’s DNA.

Scientists are now able to design a DNA sequence that will tell an enzyme to go to the exact place on a gene, and make a change to that gene’s sequence.

The technique’s precision makes earlier GM efforts seem crude and patched together. It is also proving extremely cheap, with kit costs down to as low as US\$30 for the required RNA, up to 150 times cheaper than some genetic splicing tools.

The applications of CRISPR for developing more marketable produce and protein have the agri-science sector scientists excited about its ability to manipulate common diseases and disabilities out of the human body.

Research is already translating to improved food products now available to consumers.

Earlier this year in the United States the button mushroom, modified using CRISPR technology to remove its tendency to brown in the refrigerator, could be sold without requiring US department of agriculture’s regulatory approval.

Dr Rolleston said there is research on crops and grasses already underway that could benefit significantly from CRISPR type GM work.

“AgResearch is working on producing high lipid ryegrasses with high energy content, grasses that deliver lower methane emissions, and a 30% reduction in nitrate losses from animals eating them.

“Given the impact of global warming, and the demands going on farmers to reduce their nutrient foot prints, it is easy to see how CRISPR could deliver some benefits to not only farmers, but the wider environment.”

Other areas NZ agriculture could benefit lie in work to try an eliminate pests like possums and stoats, and developing more drought tolerant crop species.

At a time when farming is being berated for its contribution to green-house gases and nutrient losses, difficulties in carrying out research that benefits both clearly frustrates scientists.

Trials on AgResearch’s High Metabolisable Energy grasses have to be conducted in the United States, due to New Zealand’s strict rules around GM crop trials.

It will not be until after 2020 that NZ researchers could seek approval based off those trials to run trials here at home.

This year’s NZ Bio Symposium at Massey University had scientists speaking out about the risk of New Zealand falling behind the rest of the world in genetic technology, particularly in regard to genetic editing.

With Canterbury the hub for NZ’s high value seed crop industry, interest in such advancements is particularly high.

Thomas Chin, general manager for the NZ Plant Breeding and Research Association said as with other technologies when first used, plant breeders are very aware of the importance of safety related to plant varieties developed through gene transfer.

“The safety of genetically modified plant varieties is ensured through a most rigorous and comprehensive set of regulatory and quality assurance systems.”

However, he said NZ regulations did not make it easy for scientists to investigate their options.

“And politically it is a tough one. Given the stage in the political cycle, with an election next year, any discussion will not be this year or the next.”

But sooner or later he said it was a discussion needed to be had.

ATS director and Ashburton farmer Ian Mackenzie hopes GM gets re-examined.

“If NZ does not get on board we are going to be left behind, this technology is the next green revolution.”

He has visited overseas research facilities already well advanced in gene editing research specifically for improving produce and protein production.

He believes countries with “wealthy and sometimes fat” populations are in no position to veto technology that brings nutritious food to otherwise starving, malnourished people.

He views gene editing as an opportunity to get the most out of the deep genetic resources within species NZ already has for protein production.

Dr Rolleston said CRISPR technology may require separation from traditional “GM” definitions in regulations, and to get better

understanding with the public.

“If it gets to the point where our customer countries do not consider CRISPR GM, it becomes harder to deny the use of it here.”

The United States is taking a case by case approach to genetic editing produce while the EU has stalled on a decision supposed to have been made in March.

Dr Rolleston said given how difficult it is to detect CRISPR changes, there remains the possibility a committed plant breeder could ultimately use the technology undetected and grow it out.

“I believe the government may change the definition of GM to make gene editing non GM, but we will need confidence that our trade partners will do that too.”



ABOVE: Dr William Rolleston, Canterbury farmer and Federated Farmers president

ABOVE TOP: Ian Mackenzie, ATS director and Canterbury farmer

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Proactive approach to lambing pays off

For sheep farmers, lambing is the crunch time of the year and if it's to be successful, it's essential to have enough feed on hand. WORDS BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



Ewes that are supplied with adequate quantities of high-quality feed, particularly in the last weeks of pregnancy and after lambing, will be less susceptible to health issues, like milk fever and pregnancy toxemia, and will produce vigorous lambs that grow well.

Preparation for a good lambing season will have begun back in autumn—well-fed ewes have higher conception rates and stand a better chance of conceiving multiples. By

early winter, ewes in good condition can still be fed at maintenance levels for a few weeks, but in the final run-up to lambing their feed requirements will rise and this is when advance planning pays dividends.

Stock energy requirements are measured in megajoules of metabolisable energy (MJ ME). Six weeks before lambing the average single-bearing ewe will need an extra 2.5 MJ ME/day on top of her maintenance requirements, increasing

to 7 MJ ME/day at lambing. This equates to 0.2 kg DM of good quality, leafy pasture (11–12 MJ ME/kg DM), rising to 0.6 kg DM/day at lambing. If the ewe is carrying twins she will need about 60 percent more energy on top of this, while a ewe carrying triplets will need almost double the amount of energy.* Once ewes lamb, their energy requirements jump again, by another fifty percent. Peak milk production is reached around three weeks after lambing and will drop off gradually over the next eight to ten weeks, as lamb pasture intakes increase.

One of the most effective ways of ensuring there is enough feed available during this critical period is by applying nitrogen nice and early. "As far as the timing goes, don't wait till lambs are dropping on the ground," says Josh Verhoek, Science Extension Officer for Ballance Agri-Nutrients. "You should be applying nitrogen well before that, to build up a bit of feed so that you have enough for ewes in the weeks coming up to lambing. Once the lambs are on the ground, you will also need good feed supplies to support lactating ewes."

Monitoring the soil temperature is key to timing nitrogen applications correctly. "The aim is to put nitrogen on as soon as soil temperatures rise," says Josh. "Pasture stops responding to nitrogen when soil temperatures drop to around 5 to 6°C, so there is no point in putting it on below that. The nitrogen response is measured in kilograms of dry matter for every kilogram of nitrogen you put on. The more the soil temperature rises as the season progresses, the greater the response. For example, in winter you could expect a 5:1 response (5kg DM/1kg N) and as spring progresses it will rise to 20:1. So the response can be very good as conditions get warmer. To avoid a feed shortage, just remember not to leave it too late."

Canterbury's sedimentary soils will be low in available sulphur after winter, making PhaSedN Quick Start, which provides nitrogen and sulphur, a good choice for the first spring application. It includes SustaiN, sulphate of ammonia and elemental sulphur. Sulphate of ammonia supplies plant-available sulphur, alongside some nitrogen, while elemental sulphur is a source of slow-release sulphur. As spring progresses and soil temperatures warm up, a switch to SustaiN is the best option.

To find out more about how to time your nitrogen applications to ensure you have enough feed for lambing, contact ATS today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) or your local Ballance Nutrient Specialist.

*A.M. Nicol and I.M. Brookes (2007), *Pasture and Supplements for Grazing Animals*

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LOVE YOUR LAND



New Mid Canterbury hub for WaterForce

WaterForce has built a new irrigation hub in the Ashburton Business Estate to service Mid Canterbury.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGE BY AMY PIPER

The purpose-built building and yard is on the main road through the new industrial area on JB Cullen Drive and about a kilometre from their temporary premises opened three years ago on Bremners Road.

WaterForce Ashburton opened their doors in August 2013 with a staff of three. In their second month of trading, the small team was faced with rebuilding over 250 centre pivot spans plus corner arms that were mangled by gale force winds that blasted the Canterbury area in September 2013. The timing was critical for farmers with the irrigation season about to begin.

"It was a challenging time for everyone involved, however as we look back it really cemented the need for us to be here, it became crucial for our clients that they had that local support to call on to get them back up and running," says Gemma Williams, manager of WaterForce Ashburton.

Historically WaterForce clients in the Ashburton area have been serviced by the Christchurch and Timaru branches; however it was always the company's intention to open in Ashburton.

The new hub, opened in July, is home to WaterForce Ashburton's team of now 20 staff, and has plenty of office space, a large purpose built workshop and warehouse areas.

WaterForce is not just about irrigation, they deal with pumping requirements for water and effluent systems, filtration, purification, stockwater and water monitoring.

Gemma said experience is key as environmental challenges around water use grew. "We knew as a business our focus needed to be on building a strong team of people to service the unique Ashburton irrigation market."

The WaterForce Ashburton design team is led by Norm Hyde, an engineer with more than 35 years' experience in sales and design and as a field technician. He has designed and installed irrigation systems all over the country and understands physical and logistical constraints. "Norm brings a huge amount of knowledge and guidance to our team," she says.

Sam Logan is service manager, he works alongside senior project manager Todd Mellsop to co-ordinate daily new or existing projects or maintenance. Other staff include field technicians,

ABOVE: The new building has plenty of office space, a large purpose built workshop and warehouse

electricians and welders, plus design and administration team members. WaterForce also runs a cadet programme for young people interested in joining the industry.

WaterForce is 100% New Zealand owned and operated and is also an accredited supplier with the industry body Irrigation New Zealand, meaning they design irrigation, effluent and water measuring systems that are fit for purpose, meet codes of practice and design standards and help the industry drive towards more sustainable operations.

Gemma said environmental planning is an important driver of any project involving water and smarter irrigation is critical. There was much to take into account including climate, land quality, production ability, soil type, land contour and water source. "Farmers here are innovative and we like to work closely with them to make sure they are using best practice."

As a company, WaterForce wants this new investment to represent a commitment that they have to their customers. In the present tough times, they believe people need their suppliers to be working smarter for them, and they believe this new site will offer greater convenience and efficiency to their customers. They welcome you to visit their new site at any time.



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Photo: Gary Harrison and Doug Sheldon

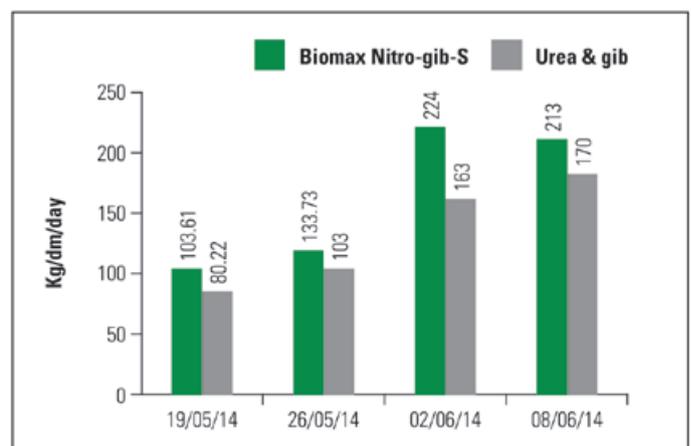
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Biomax Nitro-gib-S trial data



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

Paddock to plate



David and Kate Acland in front of their newly owned Stavelly Store

David and Kate Acland have found a great way to incorporate a paddock to plate concept into their farming operation at Mt Somers Station. They went straight to the consumer and bought the store the Staveley Store that is.

WORDS BY KATE TAYLOR, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

Established in 1876, the Staveley Store is nestled under the Mid-Canterbury foothills, in the heart of a friendly tight-knit rural community, serving delicious home-baked goods, light lunches and award winning coffee. It's also home to the Station Farm Shop—the showroom for Mt Somers Station—packed full of seasonal farm produce including lamb, venison, honey and small goods sourced from the farm, such as chutneys and jams from the station's orchard, as well as wine and olive oil from the family's Marlborough vineyard.

Kate moved to Marlborough to make wine after university and travelling. She founded Sugar Loaf Wines in 2004, naming it after the islands off the Taranaki coastline where she grew up. The winery is in Marlborough's world class wine-growing region, Rapaura, and the 21 hectare estate vineyard is home to some of the oldest vines in Marlborough, producing Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Riesling.

Today Kate calls Mt Somers home, where she lives with David and winemakers/farmers-in-training, Leo, 5, Otto, 4, and Harriet, 3.

Mt Somers Station is a 3,800ha property carrying sheep, deer, dairy cows and cattle. It runs from the Ashburton River at an altitude of 400m above sea level to the boundary of the conservation park at the base of the station's namesake, Mt Somers, at 700m.

David's parents, Mark and Jo, bought Mt Somers Station 33 years ago, but the family history in the area goes back a lot further than



that. David's great, great grandfather John Acland along with his business partner C.G Tripp, took up the 'runs' from Mt Somers Station south to Mt Peel and Orari Gorge Stations in 1856. The Aclands farmed Mt Peel Station after that partnership was dissolved and still do to this day. Mark and his brother John farmed in Mt Peel in partnership until Mark and Jo bought Mt Somers Station in 1983.

At that time, the property was underdeveloped with limited housing and no deer fencing. Mark undertook a massive development programme and the first deer were bought to the property in August 1983 at a time when deer farming in New Zealand was in its infancy.

The deer are run on the rolling downs of the station for most of the year, fawning in November with the fawns staying with their mothers for three to four months. The herd is English Red Deer, but an Elk and composite sire are used to produce mixed-breed offspring.

"The foundation of our herd was captured in the 1970s and early 80s," says David.

"We were just young when Dad started farming deer with most of the herd sourced from the



wild... caught from Orari Gorge through to Mt Somers. That's why we started with red deer but we've continued with them because they're good-sized animal, not too big, and suit this environment. They also have a good temperament and are generally a pleasure to work with in the yards."

Sire genetics come from terminal sire stags from Graham Carr's Peel Forest Estate.

After initially buying two-thirds of the station, Mark and Jo Acland purchased the last block in 2002, the same year David returned home to the farm. "My job at that time was to look after the day-to-day management of livestock on that new block," David says.

"I had returned home from university and travelling. My father was still active on the farm with a manager as well, Malcolm Clapperton, who started with Dad in 1984. He stayed on with us until 2010 and then moved on shortly after we were married. Gradually I started stepping up and taking over. I was working side by side with



TOP: David enjoys getting out of the office and helping out with stock where he is needed
 ABOVE: Kate Acland with two of their children—Otto (4) & Harriet (3)
 LEFT: The Aclands are in the process of spinning their lambs wool into yarn so that they can produce blankets and throws to sell in the Staveley Store



ABOVE: The deer herd is English Red Deer, but an Elk and composite sire are used to produce mixed-breed offspring

TOP: In time products from the dairy farm will also be sold at the Staveley Store

BELOW RIGHT: The eldest of the Acland children, Leo (5), leans on the fence with a stunning view of Mt Somers in the background

Malcolm at that stage. He was very good to me and helped me out a lot."

Mt Somers Station carries 13,000 Romney sheep, which supply the business with about 15,000 lambs each spring. The lambs are weaned after two to three months and grown out for market with the bulk of Mt Somers Station lamb supplied for export.

"This land suits a hardy, crossbred Romney-based flock because of the high rainfall in the area. It's a hardy breed that copes well with the rain while they still producing fast-growing offspring."

The sheep are shorn twice a year and the wool is used for carpets and heavier textiles.

"In cooler seasons we shear using a cover comb, which is an attachment on the shearing blade that leaves a layer of approximately 1cm of wool against the skin so sheep aren't too sensitive to cold."

David's parents started with a half-bred flock and gradually turned it into Romney.

When they moved to Mt Somers, they drove 8,000 ewes from one property to the other in one mob. "They brought them here and then did a return trip with the ewes from this place," David says.

The Mt Somers' flock has Orari Gorge Romney as a base with Wairere and Motunui Romney genetics introduced to bring different lines into the flock, says David.

The station also has a dairy unit coming into its fourth season. "We had one good season pay out and the rest not-so-good pay outs," David says wryly. "But we have many years ahead of us so things are bound to head back the other way."

The milking herd is 850-900 kiwi-cross cows, which are a mixture of Friesian and Jersey. The farm isn't irrigated so there's a lower stocking intensity of about 2.6 cows per hectare.

"We aim to farm with minimal impact on our surrounds with cows excluded from all of the waterways on the farm and extensive native planting initiatives underway."

The other classes of cattle on the station are bred out of the dairy platform through use of a Hereford or Angus sire. The calves are hand reared alongside dairy heifer replacement calves, in large open barns for up to 12 weeks with gradual access to the outdoors introduced over this time. Beef cross cattle are grown on pasture and fodder beet crops for 18 months until they reach weights of about 500 kilograms.

"We finish steer and heifer beef cross calves and we'll carry them through if there's no drought.

There's no beef cow herd. We also graze all the young stock for the dairy unit as well heifer replacements—we have 140 dairy heifers at the moment."

David says the main cross is Hereford genetics with access to top bulls from Nick and Penny

France at Okawa Herefords near Mt Somers. Some Angus has also been used this year with genetics from Kakahu Angus at Geraldine.

David says although the livestock and dairy operations are managed separately, they are fully integrated businesses with the dairy unit fully enclosed by the station. The station produces supplementary feed and provides grazing with machinery and some staff moving between the two units.

The sheep, deer, beef and grazing business is run by a livestock manager with three shepherds. A newly-appointed dairy manager is in charge of three other staff and the calf rearers, who are on short term contracts.

There's a fencer general and two maintenance staff including Nigel Dudley, who has worked for the Aclands for more than 20 years.

"He does general maintenance, tractors, all our ag work and looks after the machines. He started as a fencer general but then the machinery operator retired and he stepped in and took that over.

He's been here since I was young and his family has grown up with us here."

David's role is mainly an overseeing one with staff trusted in their roles and other jobs needing to be done on the calendar such as finance, winter feed budgeting, organising spray or fertiliser contractors and health and safety planning. But it's not all office work. On the day of this interview he was out loading deer early in the morning while another shepherd got on with moving breaks.

"I fill in the gaps when required," he says.

"I enjoy the best of both sides. I enjoy getting out and working with stock and working in the yards and helping and shifting breaks. I'm also lucky we have a team we can rely on day to day. We don't have to work seven days a week."

In total, the station has 10 full-time staff and also takes on summer students and the older children of staff members where possible too. The Café has five to seven staff and the winery in Marlborough has four for most of the year, which increases to 10 for harvest.

"Communication is the key to it all fitting together and working well," David says.



A taste of the farm at the Staveley Store

"People sense the history and they love it," says Kate Acland, who drives the passion and the practical know-how behind the Mt Somers products at the Staveley Store.

"We're really passionate about food and telling that good story about what we're doing on the farm."

Kate and David Acland bought the store in November 2015 with a view to promoting the natural produce from the station to both locals, tourists passing through and online.

"We have fantastic old brick buildings on the farm that reminded me of visiting cafes in the UK and we had played with the idea of an English-style farm shop at the station. But it would have been a challenge to start from scratch especially with the station five kilometres off the main road and needing to encourage people to turn off. The Staveley Store is five minutes away and conveniently just off the inland scenic route SH72. We were in the café as customers when we



just bought ourselves a pasteuriser so milk products will be next on the horizon starting with pasteurised whole milk and yoghurt... once we get past all the legal requirements," she says.

"It will depend on the season but we will look at butter and eventually ice cream as well, but one thing at a time," she says, laughing.

Marlborough. Kate says the range of products is growing all the time.

"We're in the process of creating lambs' wool blankets and throws. We were very lucky Wool Services scoured a small batch of our lambs' wool and it's getting ready to be spun into yarn at the moment, here in Canterbury, with the weaving in Oamaru. Keeping it all as close to home as we can."

It gets closer to home than that with Kate helping to make chutney, jams and relish from "whatever's in season" at the old station orchard.

"I do some of it. I enjoy being in the kitchen here at the store when I can fit it in, but fortunately we have an amazing cook who takes care of the rest. It makes a nice change from the office. Having lived in Blenheim, running the winery and having people around all the time, I found the farm quite a change... quiet. I still work full time but in the office on my own a lot of that time, so it's lovely going into the café to potter around in the kitchen."

The shop sells local cheese and little bits of other locally-produced things to compliment the range they are producing themselves on the farm.

"The idea is to make it deli-like but with a real focus on the farm meat and the produce."

The café follows the same use-local philosophy.

"We source as many of our nuts and vegetables locally and we've just put in big vegetable gardens. Our goal for the coming summer is to have 80 per cent of produce we use in the café food to be grown ourselves."

The Staveley Store can be found about 10 minutes south of Methven near the Mt Hutt turnoff.

"It's a tourist route in summer but we also have a strong contingent of local supporters. When it comes to 10am on a week-day morning, that's local's time," she says with a smile.



saw it was for sale and recognised it was a great opportunity. We bought the store and set about converting part of the building into the farm shop within a month of buying it."

She says the café is still the main focus of the business as they can grow the size and scope of the farm shop.

"We started with lamb, venison and honey and added a range of other products. We've

Honey comes directly from the farm thanks to a local beekeeper. Mt Somers Station has 500ha of native vegetation and beech forest that has been retired from grazing, which provides ample food source for the 400 hives producing manuka and honeydew honey in addition to the clover honey produced from the lower terraces.

The farm shop has a range of olive oil and Sugar Loaf wines from the family's business in

TOP: Kate helps to make chutney, jams & relish from "whatever's in season" at the Old Station Orchard ABOVE LEFT: The Station Farm Shop branded lamb and venison was the beginning of their range of products now available at the Staveley Store

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Using the FVI to make your pasture decisions

Endophyte, heading date and FVI performance are three key factors that need to be considered when choosing a suitable pasture option for either a dairy or crop farming system. WORDS BY AGRICOM



Agricom have a range of high yielding perennial ryegrasses with varying heading dates and are available in the leading ryegrass endophyte technologies the industry has to offer.

The Forage Value Index (FVI) produced by DairyNZ is based on data produced by the National Forage Variety Testing (NFVT) trials. This gives each variety a rating (out of five stars) based on the economic benefit that a particular cultivar offers over earlier standard cultivars first tested between 1991 and 1996.

“It is no surprise that it is a popular choice for sheep and beef or dairy systems, due to its excellent production, particularly in summer, autumn and winter months.”

ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass has a rating of five stars when sown in AR37 endophyte, offering a \$418-\$527 per hectare value over and above that achieved by common varieties*. Prospect AR37 perennial ryegrass has also been rated amongst the leading perennial ryegrasses with a four star rating, offering an increased monetary value of \$309-\$417 when sown in AR37 endophyte*.

ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass is a late heading (+20 days) solid performer, often exceeding farmers' expectations since its release. It is no surprise that it is a popular choice for sheep

and beef or dairy systems, due to its excellent production, particularly in summer, autumn and winter months.

Prospect perennial ryegrass with a heading date of +12 is also a strong performing ryegrass. It is ideal for dairy production with its excellent summer, autumn and winter growth along with its ability to be persistent under high stock pressure. Prospect was selected for its tiller density, and aimed to fit into Agricom's portfolio as a robust ryegrass that could cope with winter grazing and spring set stocking.

With both of these cultivars being late heading perennial ryegrasses they are high producers throughout the majority of the dairy season. Their flush of growth occurs in mid-late spring followed by good summer growth which continues into the autumn and winter.

Another important feature of using the FVI has been the opportunity to put a value on the different pasture production achieved when using different endophytes. ONE⁵⁰ with AR37 has consistently produced more drymatter than ONE⁵⁰ with AR1, leading to ONE⁵⁰ AR37 having a five star value while AR1 ONE⁵⁰ has a three star value, equating to around a \$200 economic benefit per hectare, per year.

It is clear now more than ever that using AR37 endophyte in a good perennial ryegrass cultivar like ONE⁵⁰ is an investment. The combination of excellent plant genetics'

ABOVE: The visual difference of plant survival of ONE⁵⁰ perennial ryegrass with different endophytes 2 ½ years after sowing in the Canterbury foothills (photo taken 1st July 2011; AR1 [left], AR37 [middle], low endophyte [right]).

and novel endophyte technology has lifted the overall quality, production, persistence and growth habits of ryegrass. The major leap forward with the introduction of novel endophytes, in particular AR37, has lifted ryegrass plants tolerance to a wider range of insects and the dollar value of this is showing through in the FVI.

“...AR37, has lifted ryegrass plants tolerance to a wider range of insects and the dollar value of this is showing through in the FVI.”

For more information on the perennial ryegrasses Agricom has to offer contact ATS Seed today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

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

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Keeping farm bikes in tune

Motorbikes, two wheels or four, are the true workhorses on almost every farm. Treat them right and they'll last for years, says Honda Country service manager Murray Sexton. WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

Honda Country in Ashburton has been keeping motorcycles and motorcyclists in action for more than four decades. They carry a full range of Honda farm, dirt and children's motorcycles, parts and accessories, and offer an experienced team of technicians to carry out servicing and repairs at their workshop or in the field.

Experience is important and the workshop crew have a combined total of 66 years with Honda Country. Owner Brendan Price has been combining his passion for motorbikes as a business and hobby for 31 years.

Murray looks after the sales and says knowing a farmer's needs and delivering a machine that is value for money is a business rule of thumb that keeps customers coming back.

The dairy downturn means fewer motorbikes are being sold, but most farmers are sticking to their service regimes to keep bikes ticking over season to season. The 150cc machines that are used to bring in the herd or as general farm transport should be serviced three or four times a year.

Murray said wheel bearings and brake components were the most common repairs

needed and farmers could arrange for the work to be done on farm, meaning minimal disruption to farming schedules.

Honda Country has two fully-equipped service vehicles that technicians take onto the owner's farm so bikes can be serviced on the spot without the hassle of the owner having to take them to town on the back of a truck or trailer.

"Those two-wheelers and four-wheelers work hard in their environment but with regular servicing they will last well!"

The store sells new and pre-owned two-wheelers and four-wheelers, including the new Honda Pioneer side-by-side range.

Murray also recommends quad bikes be fitted with speed limiters. "Setting a maximum speed of 40kph means repairs and maintenance costs are reduced, and it's safer for the operator."

ABOVE: On-farm servicing is popular so bikes can be serviced on the spot without the hassle

ABOVE TOP: The store sells new and pre-owned two and four wheelers

ABOVE LEFT: The East Street frontage has been modernised this year with a drive through for drop offs and pick ups

This speed limiter system still allows the operator maximum power for towing and on hills.

GPS vehicle tracking devices are also a valuable extra for quad bikes, and these come with a personal alarm beacon.

He said the on-farm servicing was popular but if something more involved was identified, the bikes could be bought back to the workshop by the service truck.

The East Street frontage has been modernised this year and the drive-through for drop offs and pickups means there is no awkward loading or unloading on the street.

Honda Country is also proud of its record supporting national and community organisations. Honda Country and Blue Wing Honda (who import the motorbikes) support the annual New Zealand Young Farmer Competition and the New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards.

At a local level, the guys from Honda Country are active motorcyclists involved in the Ashburton Motorcycle Club and often run race or trail ride events as fundraisers for other local sports organisations or schools.



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Sunshine yields energy gains

Harvesting sunshine and providing cheap solar electricity to farmers who help with that harvest is providing an exciting new power option for Canterbury rural energy users.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE



Kea Energy has teamed up with ATS Energy to offer its solar power technology and electricity supply as an option for members who want to make their first step off the national grid, benefitting from significant power savings and helping improve the energy footprint of their farm business.

Kea Director Campbell McMath understands farm energy demands better than most, thanks in part to the family owning a farm in the Rakaia region, and to founding the company on hydro turbines powered off the Rakaia river that now provide 30% of Orion's (Canterbury lines company) embedded annual exported energy.

He also has taken his hands on experience as a Systems Control Engineer with Orion to build a company now at the cutting edge of decentralised power supply. Kea Energy is providing options and opportunity to rural communities and farms challenged by costly energy options, or are seeking to spread the risk of reliance upon a conventional grid supply.

From the hydro schemes they started with, the company is now offering farms and businesses the opportunity to have arrays of solar panels, control systems and batteries installed free of charge on farm properties. In return, farm owners benefit from receiving a supply of electricity guaranteed to cost less than conventional supplied electricity.

For Kea Energy, the benefit of the arrangement lies in the company's ability to sell the electricity to the

client and any "surplus" electricity not used by their array clients back onto the national grid at spot price rates. Another name for the scheme is a PPA (Power Purchase Agreement).

"It is interesting when you tell people about our model. Some are wary because it just seems too good to be true, our income comes from selling electricity not panels, while they save on what is generated, so it's win-win."

The arrays can be installed as "tracked" arrays that follow the sun, or fixed, and are installed with inverters for voltage conversion, cables and control equipment, along with the labour requirement, all for free.

To date the company has four dairy shed operations with solar arrays installed, and one trial shed also has the latest in "lithium battery (LiFePO4)" storage technology installed. These batteries have the ability to store about 10kWh of energy, and deliver about 5kW of power.

"Another battery technology we are investigating is flow batteries where they are not quite as efficient but are more attractive as the cost is cheaper and life of the battery is longer."

"Spiky" power demands from a farm dairy's operation include water pump and milk pumps kicking in and out during milking, and for that reason operators remain on the grid.

But Campbell says the technology around batteries, controls and solar panels is advancing

rapidly, bringing the day of stand-alone dairy operations closer.

"The lithium batteries are a modular type system, and you can add extra batteries on to increase the capacity, while for flow batteries you just get a bigger battery."

The company also has a site in Brookside with 52.5kW of solar panels, and a 10kWh battery to help local lines company Orion with peak power demands.

Campbell says both battery and solar panel technology is advancing rapidly, and he anticipates recent changes proposed on transmission pricing may hasten farmers interest in alternative power sources like Kea Energy's options.

These changes relate to the Transmission Pricing Review being conducted by the Electricity Authority. The review is examining the rates charged to lines companies in different regions for investment back into grid supply infrastructure. Under the new proposals instead of these costs being averaged nationally, each region will be required to pay, based on the actual cost share of infrastructure investment as a proportion of the entire national grid's investment cost.

Because the Ashburton region is presently based on the lower consumption period of winter for these costings, the move will result in significant increases in the transmission charges lines companies the region will pay.

Campbell said Kea's scale meant it was better able to acquire an economic return on the electricity it sold back onto the grid, compared to individuals trying to sell relatively small packets of privately generated electricity onto the grid.

"And we are targeting clients with electricity bills of \$2500 a month or more to make it a worthwhile exercise for both parties".

"As part of our contract with our clients, we guarantee we will be cheaper than their retail price, and if their price drops, we will maintain that guarantee."

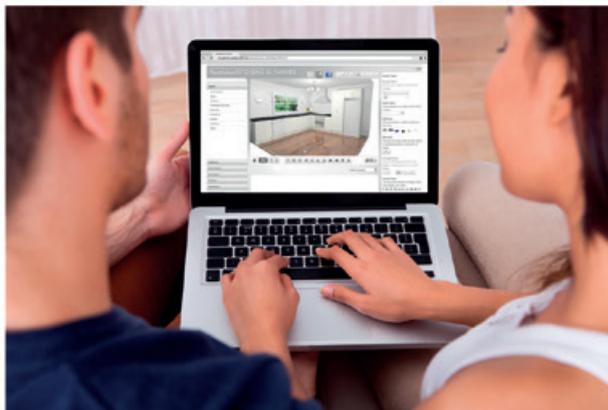
While every installation is different, dairy sheds will use about 30-40% of the power generated from the solar array, and savings will typically be over \$3000 a year. Savings are greater for businesses (not just dairy sheds) which are operating right through the day.

"We have one farm operation we are looking at which savings we expect to be around \$18,000 year, across the four dairies it operates, and a rural school we are quoting on is looking to save about \$25,000 a year."

To learn more about Kea Energy, contact ATS Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

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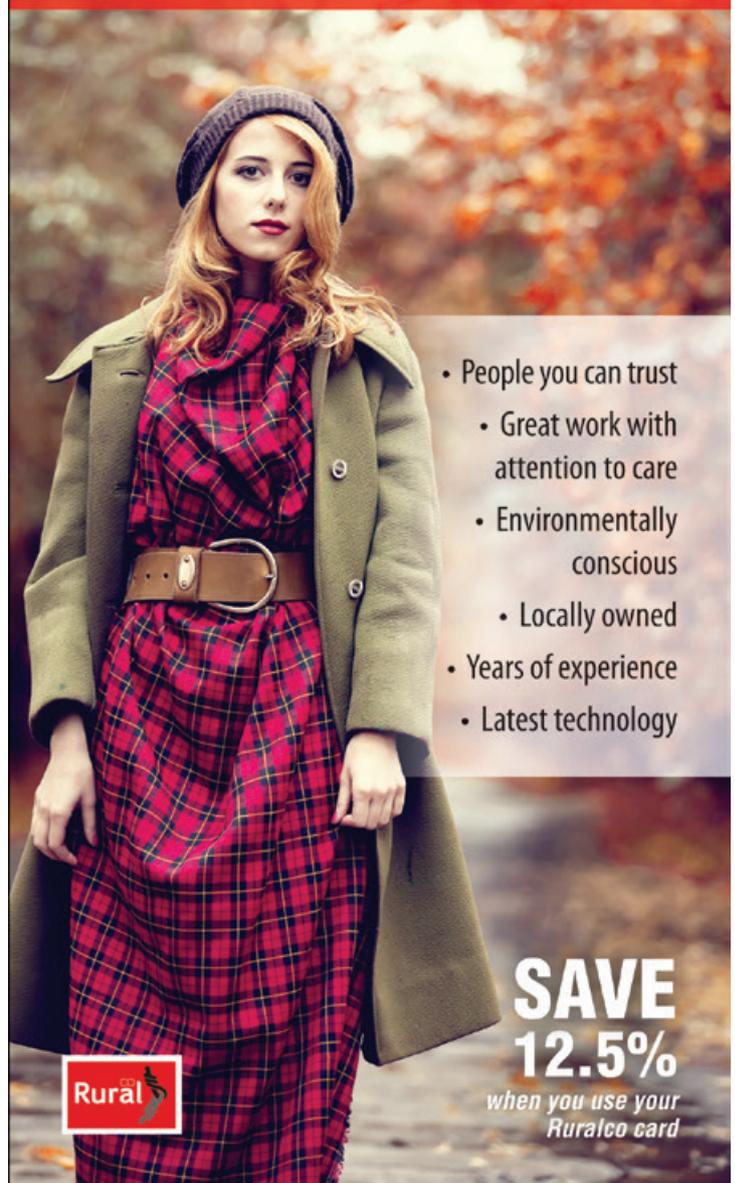
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FEATURE



Instore Days a highlight for farmers

The resilience and quiet confidence shown by Mid Canterbury's farmers was behind the success of this year's ATS Instore Days.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER & CHARLOTTE SHERRATT

Feedback from the two day event showed suppliers had successful interactions with the hundreds of farming folk who turned out to grab a bargain and learn about the latest innovations and technologies on offer over the 22nd annual Instore Days.

Sales and the number of transactions were up around 40 and 10 percent respectively compared to last year's record breaking event. Acting chief executive, Rob Sharkie said given the difficulties being experienced in the rural sector, no one would have been surprised if this year's Instore Days were only on a par with last year's, which had been the best to date.

"The fact the results were so good shows there is some cautious optimism in the agricultural industry at the moment and that's good news for all of us. It's good for the whole community and farming in general."

Attendance was slightly up on last year, with similar numbers taking advantage of the free lunch on offer and as always the weather played its part, with a wet start to the second day meaning many farmers didn't arrive until mid-morning.

"What was different this year was we had people lining up outside the door before 8am on the first morning, keen to take advantage of the specials, especially those in the ATS Gift & Homeware Store."

A conscious decision to move the Instore Days a week forward this year ensured suppliers would be able to interact with farmers before calving, but also meant it was the first year for a long time the event did not coincide with the school holidays. It was a bit of a punt, said Rob, but it seemed to pay off. "We did find there was a bit of an influx of numbers after 3pm as families arrived with their school children, which kept attendance steady throughout the days and meant no one missed out."

Around 100 ATS and Ruralco suppliers were on hand to meet and greet farmers while showcasing their wares. Some were long-standing attendees, while for others it was their first time at the Instore Days. "They have all said they want to come back again next year, which is a great indication of how important Instore Days are for their businesses."

The event is also profitable, with several suppliers reaching their two day targets by lunchtime on the first day.

"All were encouraged to be proactive and to fully engage with farmers and they all did this

admirably. "This was noted by judges of the best sites, who dedicated almost a full day to judging. This year the judges were Terry Brosnahan (editor of New Zealand's Country Wide rural magazine), Jo Taylor (2015 Supreme Winner of New Zealand Enterprising Rural Women Awards and founder and editor of Latitude magazine) and Chris Allen (local farmer and Federated Farmers National Board member).

THE BEST SITE AWARDS WENT TO:

ATS Supplier Winner
Gallagher

ATS Supplier Runner Up
Totally Kiwi

Ruralco Supplier Winner
Southern Woods Plant Nursery

Ruralco Supplier Runner Up
Stocker Dairy Services

ATS Business Partner Winner
Meridian

All winners said the event was a great opportunity to interact with farmers, promote their businesses and gain valuable feedback on where the industry was at and what customers were looking for.

Meridian Agribusiness Key Account Manager, Glenn McWhinnie said Instore Days were a perfect way for Meridian staff to meet with customers face to face and build on the strong relationship the business already has with ATS and Ruralco cardholders. He said there had been plenty of queries about how to save money on power bills—"that's what it's about."

Winning the best Business Partner site award was also a great coup. "We're absolutely wrapped. We won it three years ago and it's been on our list to reclaim it, so we are over the moon."

For Gallagher, their win as best ATS Supplier site was especially pleasing as it was the business's first time at the Instore Days.

Their development and promotion of Flashmate, an electronic heat detector which shows if a cow is on heat or not won the International Innovation Award at this year's Fieldays and helped earn Gallagher a spot at this year's Instore Days.

Canterbury Territory Manager, Chris Richards said the Instore Days had been a fantastic

collaboration and had provided Gallagher with a number of business leads and sales opportunities despite the hard times being faced by many in the dairy sector. Winning an award was an added bonus and they hope to be back again next year to contest it.

For Ruralco Supplier site winner, Southern Woods, the interaction with cardholders was invaluable. Not only were they able to help with customer queries, they also received useful feedback on current needs and trends. "Days like these let us know what plants perform locally and help us with our future planning," said Southern Woods Marketing Manager, Rico Mannall.

Having the time to answer questions and solve problems, while putting faces to customers had been very worthwhile. "It helps us connect with our customers."

Ashburton based Hanham Concrete has attended most Instore Days over the years, and decided this year they would do something a bit different. Instead of displaying concrete water troughs and other farm gear, this year their stand featured a variety of concrete garden ornaments.

Operations Manager, Bob Reid, said it had worked really well as it had created a talking point with customers. "With the recent down-turn we started looking for other things to do, and this has been quite popular." Also popular at the Instore Days, were traditional troughs and products with sales being much greater than anticipated, making the event successful on several levels for the business.

Another long-standing attendee of the Instore Days, Bell Booth also reported great demand for their product, including their ever popular Queen of Calves feed supplement. Canterbury West Coast Product Specialist, Glenn France said they had been to the last five or six Instore Days and the feedback they gain from customers made the event a must for their annual calendar.

Instore Day's newcomer, Dan Cosgrove Limited was another business impressed with the event and the connections they were able to make with new and old customers. "It's good for our business to try and get in front of people and talk to them about our projects," said Managing Director, Gary Fahey.

As a manufacturer of silos and other sheet metal products, it was really useful to interact with customers to share their product knowledge. It was also a great opportunity to showcase new products like their new stainless steel lined water tanks which have a galvanised steel outer-casing.

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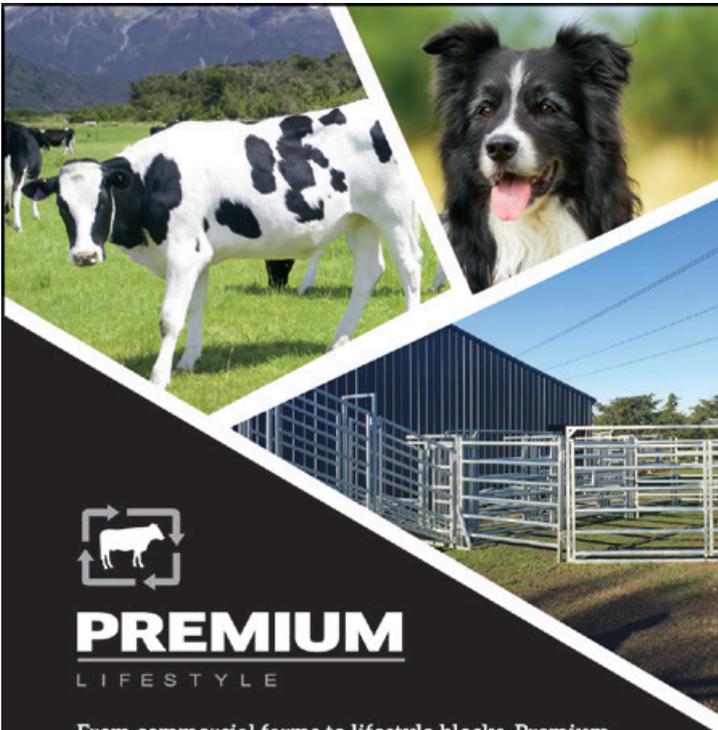


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Stock yards to last the distance

Former farmers David Mitchell and his son Thomas know a good set of cattle yards when they see them. The pair bought Premium Lifestyle last year knowing the quality steel stockyards they make could deal with five or 500 hefty cattle beasts.

WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGE BY PREMIUM LIFESTYLE

Since last December they have been spreading the world about the cattle yards, sheep yards, gates and dog runs made by the company. While the previous owners were dedicated to lifestyle farmers, the Mitchells say the yards are great value no matter the size of the herd or the farming operation.

Thomas said the previous owners spent considerable energy perfecting the yards, which are modular so can be configured into a small unit for just a few cattle beasts, or more can be purchased and arranged to form far larger yards for bigger herds.

Now the Mitchells have grown the business to include some big farmers alongside the lifestyle farmers. "A lot of our competitors are geared towards great big farmers and it can be intimidating for those wanting something smaller. But whether you've got 500 or five cattle beasts, you still have to get them into a yard to get them off the place."

He said the low overheads Premium Lifestyle has provides them with the ability to offer heavier duty equipment than their competitors while being significantly cheaper.

David was a sheep and beef farmer in South Canterbury before moving to Rolleston to train horses. The Mitchells run Premium Lifestyle from a training facility on State Highway 1 half-way between Rolleston and Templeton.

Thomas, who grew up on the farm, said a large shed on the property was the warehouse and headquarters for the business. Customers are welcome to visit and view the range.

It has become a passion for the father and son, who are enjoying working together. Thomas has a Bachelor of Commerce (with honours)

MAIN IMAGE: The cattle yards are configured so they can be used for a few cattle beasts or a larger herd

and spent four years working for a building products firm when the chance arose to work with his father.

"He and I started looking for something we could do together. He has so much agricultural knowledge from his farming days and we both recognised Premium Lifestyle products were technically well-made with quality steel. The previous guys were not farmers but they were great engineers."

Thomas said there had been a few minor alternations to the yard plans, based on their farming experience, and the yards and dog runs were proving popular. Sales are made via their website, but they are looking for local distributors around the country; watch out for them at A&P shows this season too.

Premium Lifestyle yards are used off the farm too - the customs department at Auckland Airport uses their dog runs to confine animals being held in quarantine, many A&P shows utilise the products as do a number of pony clubs throughout the country.

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Managing Director of Hortus, Aaron Jay, was stuck between a rock and hard place before deciding to take on our Owner Manager Programme.

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Well-deserved recognition for winners

It's not often Alan Neumann is lost for words but when Neumanns Tyres was named Supreme Supplier at this year's Ruralco Supplier Awards, he was speechless.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER



"I was lost for words—that's why I handed the microphone over to Vincent." That put his son well and truly on the spot, but he represented the family business well, thanking all who supported them for their part in the company's success. It was the first time the Ashburton family owned business, which has been operating for over 70 years, had won the Supreme Supplier Award. "We have been in the top five for a few years but this was a total surprise. I hadn't even prepared a speech," said Alan.

This year's Ruralco Supplier Awards were held in Ashburton with around 200 turning out to celebrate everything that makes Ruralco great in business.

Ruralco National Sales Manager, Lester Chambers told attendees it had been a fantastic year of continued growth and the award's ceremony was about thanking the suppliers who had supported Ruralco.

In announcing the Supreme Award, Lester said Neumanns Tyres had maximised their supplier relationship to members in a positive and measurable way.

Co-owners and brothers, Alan and Ian concurred. They said winning the top Supplier Award wasn't just about sales. It was also about relationships—both between Neumanns and Ruralco and how the two mutually promoted and supported each other, and between Neumanns and the Ruralco

Cardholders. Alan and Ian said the win clearly demonstrated the loyalty shown by Ruralco Cardholders and the strength of the Ruralco business model.

"Ruralco has been a great success story for us and the rural connection has been very important. Generally we get more loyalty from the rural sector and we are seeing that especially as we start dealing with second and in some cases, third generations of farmers."

They said the award was great recognition of their staff. "We are very proud of them." A number of the 34 strong team had been with the business for 25 years, and some as long as 40, with many of the longer-serving staff members having stepped up and taken on more responsibility within the business over recent years.

Even between Alan and Ian, there is almost 90 years of service, continuing the legacy created by their parents, Len and Kath. And that family approach is set to continue through to the next generation with children, Vincent and Emma also taking their place in the business. Alongside is Maxine Muckle, who also has family connections, and together with Ian, will keep the business ticking over as Alan takes a step back from the day-to-day running of the company.

"For us, it has been a great honour to be part of the awards every year, but obviously this year has been even more special!"

Last year's Supreme Award winners, Ashburton based auto electrical business Newlands, have added another trophy to the shelf after winning this year's award for Excellence in Marketing.

Managing Director, Robert Newlands said the award was a great reflection of the efforts by the team and the strong partnership they have with Ruralco.

The business had worked hard to develop a number of marketing initiatives throughout the

ABOVE: Alan and Ian Neumann from Neumanns Tyre Services

BELOW: Polly Cavanagh, David & Debbie Nesbit from Methven Hammer Hardware





SUPREME SUPPLIER

Winner: Neumanns Tyres

Runner Up: Harrison Spraying

EXCELLENCE IN MARKETING

Winner: Newlands Group

Runner Up: ElectraServe

EMERGING BUSINESS

Winner: SolarPro Mid Canterbury

Runner Up: House of Hearing

MEMBERS' CHOICE

Winner: Methven Hammer Hardware

Runner Up: Neumanns Tyres



last 12 months, and to consistently and creatively promote their relationship with Ruralco. "We made a concerted effort to regularly advertise in Ruralco publications like Real Farmer and to attend promotions such as Instore Days. We also made the most of flyer distribution opportunities to cardholders and we ensured we promoted the Ruralco logo wherever possible and the Supplier Awards logo which was connected with our win last year."

"The increased emphasis on marketing has paid off for us." Analysis of sales had shown where spend increases had occurred and Robert said the effort had been worth it.

He said this year's award was pretty unexpected. "Seeing as we won the main award last year, we thought we would be pushing our luck this year. We are thrilled to have received the marketing one. It was a great surprise."

The winners of this year's Emerging Business Award were "stoked" and felt it was a good



reflection of the growth and excitement being shown in their people and their product.

The Mid Canterbury franchise of SolarPro won the Emerging Business Award after jumping at the chance to become part of the Ruralco network just on a year ago. Consultant, Michael Lye said the relationship with Ruralco had been a great help in getting the business's name out there, and especially to farmers.

"We have been keen to take any opportunity we can within that relationship, whether it be advertising or Instore Days. We knew that becoming a supplier would create massive opportunities for us and it has."

SolarPro was created in the South Island to market and distribute its very own solar air panels, which make great use of the sun's energy to create warmer, drier and healthier homes. The panels can be retrofitted to any existing ventilation system so the sun's energy can be converted and distributed throughout a home.

He said there had been good interest in the panels from farmers, and feedback had been very positive. "Interest is building and we are looking forward to continuing our relationship with Ruralco to reach more of the rural market."

This year's Members' Choice Award went to Methven's Hammer Hardware and was a complete surprise for business owners David and Debbie Nesbit.

The couple were largely unaware of the Ruralco promotion encouraging cardholders to vote for their favourite suppliers. They had seen the

TOP (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): Blair Watson from ElectraServe, Sheryl and Gary Harrison from Harrison Spraying, Vinnie Neumann from Neumanns Tyres, David Taylor from Solar Pro Mid Canterbury, Alan Neumann from Neumanns Tyres, Polly Cavanagh, David and Debbie Nesbit from Methven Hammer Hardware, Robert and Karla Newlands from Newlands

ABOVE: Lisa Cartwright from Ruralco with Mike Ward from Spiderban and Jan Steenkamp from PlaceMakers

BELOW LEFT : Mitch Moore and Blair Watson from ElectraServe

text messages and heard radio advertising but it never occurred to them to campaign for votes—they didn't even vote for themselves. As a consequence they were completely blown away by winning the award.

"That makes it even more special that our customers voted for us because they thought we provided a great service. It's the best recognition you can get," they said.

Cardholders were asked to vote for suppliers who offered value for money and went beyond the call of duty, giving exceptional service.

David and Debbie have run Methven Hammer Hardware for the last nine years, and prior to that Methven Supersave. It was here they first became suppliers, and when they changed businesses, they again sought supplier status as they could see the benefits for Hammer Hardware and their customers.

They say the award is fantastic recognition for the whole team and the trophy is now sitting pride of place on the front counter.

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WORDS BY LINDA CLARKE, IMAGES BY BLACKS FASTENERS



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They have a team of trained professionals who know their fasteners, over a range of industries from engineering, construction and automotive to hydraulic, mechanical, electrical and plumbing.

Managing director Roger Black said farmers liked to walk the aisles at the company's Sockburn store in Christchurch, where they could pick up nuts and bolts for their irrigators and other farm machinery. Experienced staff there could answer any question with good advice and recommendations, with products designed to cope with the environment and workload.

The huge range of fasteners in Blacks' inventory is fully computerised, enabling on-the-spot answers to enquiries, fast quotation turnaround and efficient sales and dispatch.

Roger said Blacks' aim was to be a leader in the industry, always looking to innovate and evolve for the benefit of their customers, communities and stakeholders.

A key asset was staff, who took pride in their work and put themselves in the customer's shoes to make sure their service exceeded expectations, he said.

"We work in partnership with our customers to progress their projects by providing them with high quality and reliable products."

An important part of business was a 100% service guarantee: Blacks guarantee delivery within 24 hours on stocked items, order accuracy, product guarantee, and returns for up to 60 days.

Blacks' website is a portal to their 24-7 online trade store. Simply click on a button to enter the store and have access to their complete range of products, which also includes power tools and adhesives.

Roger said providing a big range of good quality products at competitive prices had earned Blacks a good reputation, which the company was proud of.

The company takes pride in the part they play in community projects. They support two conservation projects, including the relocation of the endangered Yellowhead native bird species onto predator-free Blumine Island, as well as helping create Kaipupu Point, a sanctuary for endangered native birds and other flora and fauna near Picton. They also sponsor Outward Bound placements for at risk young people.

Blacks are also proud to be involved in the public art installation Fanfare. The huge public sculpture on the northern motorway into Christchurch was gifted to Christchurch by the city of Sydney following the earthquakes.



ABOVE: They have a team of trained professionals who know their fasteners, over a range of industries
 ABOVE TOP: Blacks Fasteners supply a wide range of top quality fasteners at a competitive price
 MAIN IMAGE: There are six accessible locations throughout New Zealand supplying top quality fasteners

Its steel frame is 20m in diameter, weighs 25 tonnes and has 360 separate one metre diameter wind-powered pinwheels covering the surface of the structure. Blacks supplied all the nuts and bolts for the installation, which was originally suspended from Sydney Harbour Bridge for the 2005 New Year celebrations.



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Early lactation diet: When quality meets quantity

Meeting your dairy cow’s dietary requirements is never more important than during the early stage of lactation, when her needs surge. Catering well for her during this demanding period will substantially ease her transition into peak production and cycling.

WORDS BY SEALESWINSLOW



From a nutritional point of view, the weeks following calving are critical for a dairy cow. She is recovering from pregnancy, has just produced a calf, is starting lactation and is preparing for cycling; it’s easy to see why her metabolism is in need of a boost.

Nutrition is paramount

SealesWinslow’s Animal Nutrition Specialist Paul Sharp knows that nutrition alone can enhance (or undo) the hard work that goes into preparing the herd for calving and lactation. As he explains, “It all hinges on the fact that dietary requirements in early lactation exceed the cow’s ability to consume sufficient pasture and supplements.” Her rumen, which had shrunk to accommodate the growing calf, has to expand after calving to once again reach full potential.

To avoid weight loss, maintain reproductive health and safeguard peak milk levels it’s vital to improve the quantity and quality of feed. “Your high-genetic worth cow will deliver optimum returns with intakes based on 4 percent of liveweight,” says Paul. That’s around 18 kg/DM/day for a typical 450 kg liveweight animal.

When calculating feed numbers, be sure to consider various forms of wastage and other reasons for non-consumption. “Size of feeding area and feed bin space on feed pads, for instance, play a role in ensuring equal access to feed”, notes Paul, who advises allowing 700 mm of feeding space per cow.

Then there’s the matter of unequal pasture and feed distribution within the herd. This comes to the fore when feed levels are insufficient—heifers or sick cows can easily miss out due to shyness. As a result, they suffer weight loss along with reduced mating performance and lower production levels.

It goes to show that the importance of ad libitum access to sufficient pasture and feed cannot be overstated.

Driving production through nutrition

A commitment to quality and quantity of nutrition is vital to reduce liveweight losses and achieve top production levels. It’s noteworthy that every additional litre produced during early lactation will generate 200 litres during the season.

To achieve optimal outcomes it’s advantageous to firstly ensure increased energy density and availability of the feed. Accordingly, consider that high protein levels (30%) in spring pasture are well beyond the 18% that a cow requires. And, although surplus protein is utilised as an energy source, the resulting rumen ammonia ends up being converted into urinary nitrogen, and this process unnecessarily diverts metabolic energy away from milk production.

“You can address the protein surplus by supplementing soluble carbohydrates. This will lift

herd production levels when dietary protein levels are high,” says Paul. Besides, soluble carbohydrate levels are low in spring pasture (typically at 5–15%) compared to optimum dietary levels of 30%.

Secondly, it pays to undertake pasture testing to eliminate any limiting nutrients. Macro-nutrients and trace elements, particularly calcium and magnesium, are often limiting through spring pastures. Any deficiencies can be inexpensively corrected, with great reproductive health and production benefits.

High-quality diet checklist

- ✓ Dense in nutrients: high DM content, e.g. pelleted meal, crushed grain, cereal silage
- ✓ Mix of nutrients: energy, protein, fibre, carbohydrates, macro-minerals, trace elements
- ✓ Enables high voluntary intake: sufficient feed
- ✓ Excess protein balanced with soluble carbohydrates

It’s worth stressing that information about the composition and quantity of the pasture is a key success factor. What else can give you the certainty about which nutrient is most limiting? Armed with this knowledge, you can tweak the diet and improve animal performance in the most cost effective way.

To discuss specific nutritional requirements, talk to ATS today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) or your local SealesWinslow Representative.

	TYPICAL SPRING PASTURE COMPOSITION	IDEAL DAIRY COW DIET REQUIREMENTS—EARLY LACTATION*
Crude protein content	25–30%	18–20%
Soluble sugars and starch	5–15%	35%
Acid detergent fibre (ADF)	18–22%	16% min
Neutral detergent fibre (NDF)	25–40%	25% min
Phosphorous (g/100 g)	0.3–0.5	0.4 min
Calcium (g/100 g)	0.4–0.7	0.6 min
Magnesium (g/100 g)	0.15–0.18	0.22 min
Sodium (g/100 g)	0.1–0.2	0.2

Data taken from AgFact 251 (AgResearch); * NRC—Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle

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Tech Tips

BECOME TECH-SAVVY WITH RURALCO'S TOP TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Ever wonder why the data on your smartphone/ device seem to run like a broken tap at the pub?

Here are some tips to help you monitor the data usage on your smart device:

ANDROID

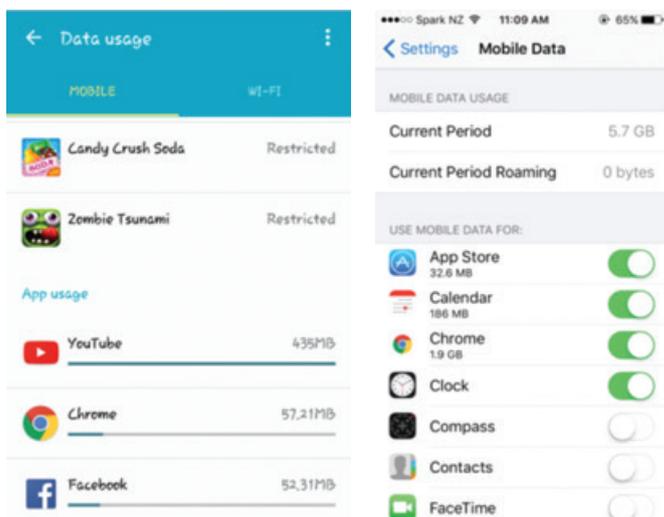
1. On your phone, open Settings;
2. Under 'Wireless and Network' or 'Network', open Data Usage;
3. Under Data Usage, you will see options for turning your mobile data on/off, setting a limit on your mobile data, as well as a graph showing you your usage for a certain time period;
4. Scroll down to view the data usage of your apps;
5. Tap on an app to see a more detailed report;
6. Scroll down and tick 'Restrict background data'. A pop-up will show;
7. Tap 'OK'. Do this to all apps you find that use too much of your data.

Note: Some apps may have the ability to overwrite this, such as Google Services.

IPHONE

1. Open Settings;
2. Go to Mobile Data;
3. Scroll down until you see the list of apps. Under each app, you will see how much data they have used to the duration of the reference period. If you have not reset the statistics, this will reflect the data you have used since the first day you've had your Iphone;
4. Choose which apps you most likely will not utilize when on mobile data. On each app, swipe the toggle to the left/off;
5. If you need to use it in the future, you swipe the toggle back to the right/on.

IMPORTANT: Don't forget to close those apps. To make sure your apps don't use more data than it needs, close the app completely by double clicking on the home button and swipe up the screen.



Fixing those everyday connectivity issues

WORDS PROVIDED BY
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As high speed broadband use increases rapidly in rural and urban homes, so does the requirement for reliable connectivity. As we use more Netflix, more streaming on demand services and rely more on our connections, when our connection is down or not working well, we notice it and we want it fixed sooner.

The first thing we assume is there is an issue with the Internet connection our Internet Service Provider (ISP) is providing. This may be the case but more often than not, statistics say in 80% or more of cases the issue is actually in your home either on your devices, the router or the most common fault, power related issues.

There are a bunch of common issues such as slow Wi-Fi or slow internet in general, drop offs of the connection or unable to access the router or get online. Ninety-five percent of common ISP helpdesk faults calls are for these faults, many are able to be resolved without calling your ISP.

So how can you resolve your connection issues yourself without having to pick up the phone & wait for your ISP to answer? Here are some ISP basics for fixing your problematic connection:

1. Locate your broadband modem or router equipment. If you have a wireless internet service, there may be a POE (power over Ethernet box). If fibre there will be an ONT or IMG Fibre termination box, for ADSL will be a modem/router & for RBI / 4G services you will have a mobile router.
2. Check everything is plugged in correctly, i.e. no loose cables etc. and correct if there are loose cables.
3. Switch power off to all equipment, but don't unplug any cables, just switch the power off at the wall, we want to avoid cables being muddled up.
4. We recommend leaving off for 10 minutes at least, clears the capacitors etc. If you have an RBI or 4G service taking the SIM out is also a wise move.
5. Switch everything back on and wait a few minutes and test.

In most cases your connection will be back working better, the gear just needed a break, yes electronics get a little stressed and need a break too. If these steps don't resolve things you can try these tips below before giving in and calling the ISP:

- Switch off your devices or turn off Wi-Fi on those devices (PC's, phones, tablets), follow a similar line to the router/modem, this resolves a high proportion of issues especially related to Wi-Fi
- If your connection is still slow test a laptop or PC via an Ethernet cable plugged straight into the router. Wi-Fi will never be as good as a cable connection. If there is a big difference, try changing the Wi-Fi channel of the router, or on a managed service ask your ISP to do this (a call or email may be needed) Wi-Fi is prone to interference, again the issue isn't the connection more the local environment in your house.

If none of the above helps it sounds like it is time to call in the Calvary at your ISP. Remember your ISP doesn't know you have a problem until you tell them, so if you have done all of the above calling your ISP will get you on the right track to getting your connection issues sorted.

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We have only implemented this for a few suppliers but we will be rolling this out across more suppliers. To confirm the discount and how you should receive your discount please check the businesses page listing on the Ruralco Website at www.ruralco.co.nz. If your discount has been missed, either at point of sale or on your statement, please contact Ruralco on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

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

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* Minimum delivery 500 litres. Terms and conditions apply. Refer to the Ruralco website for latest pricing, updated weekly.

Weekly livestock sales reports from HRL

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

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

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- Angela Muckle winner of the gift basket from FMG
- Robert Watson winner of the \$1,000 House of Travel Voucher from Orion Agriscience
- Alan Lochhead winner of the Weber BBQ Pack from Nufarm
- Gordon Duthie winner of a \$500 House of Travel Voucher from ATS Seed
- Wyvern Jones winner of a \$500 House of Travel Voucher from ATS Seed
- Shayne Jones winner of a \$500 House of Travel Voucher from ATS Seed
- Maguire Dairy Ltd winner of a \$250 Agriseeds Voucher
- Sue Rankin winner of a \$100 ATS Voucher for guess the Fodder Beet Weight 9.75kg
- Marilyn Gray winner of the Property Brokers gift basket

- Lilly Anderson winner of the \$300 Travel voucher from World Travellers
- Trish Vessey winner of 200 Air NZ points from World Travellers

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- Friday – Danielle Bosch and Graham Brooker

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- Hamish Marr

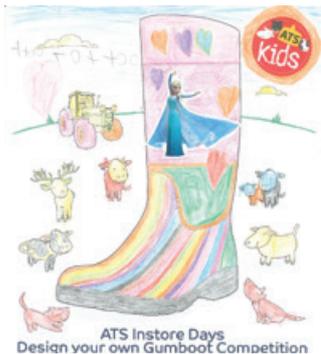
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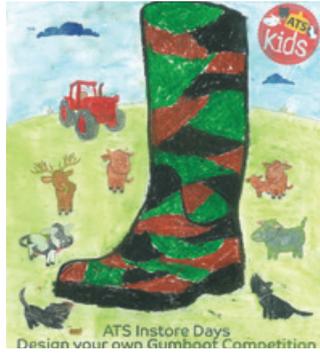
- 1st: Grace Farr
- Runner Up: Henry Halliday
- Highly Commended: Aden Molloy

8–12 Age Group:

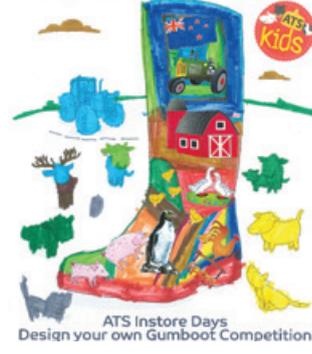
- 1st: Blake Miller
- Runner Up: Ella McDowell
- Highly Commended: Masha Pospolitik



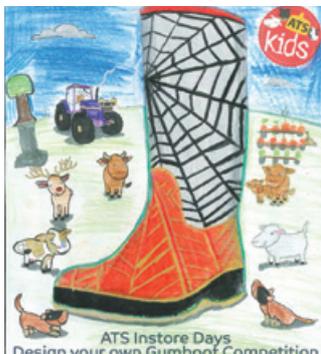
1st 3-7 Years Grace Farr



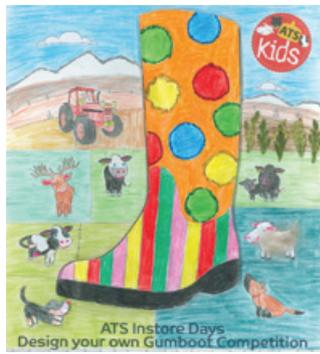
2nd 3-7 Years Henry Halliday



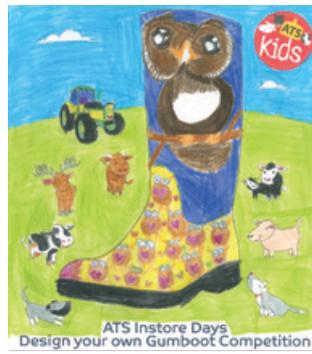
HC 3-7 Years Aden Molloy



1st 8-12 Years Blake Miller



2nd 8-12 Years Ella McDowell



HC 8-12 Years Masha Pospolitik

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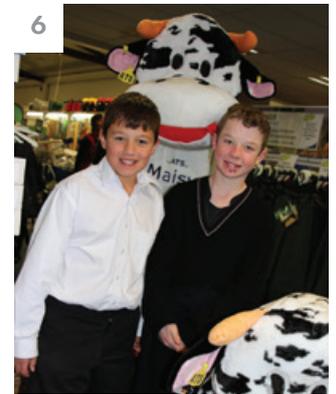
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