

# RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2019



Homegrown pork  
holds its own

Pork prospects  
good despite  
challenges

Will to live a  
campaign  
from the heart

Pouring years of  
experience into a  
seriously drinkable  
wine

First Ruralco  
bonus rebate  
for six years

# From the Group CEO



**Welcome to our last Real Farmer for 2018. Once again we have brought together a great selection of farming features, business and technology updates, and plenty more in between.**

At a quick glance, you will see we have a couple of recurring themes in this publication. The first gives us an insight into the realities of pig farming with Canterbury farmers, Hamish and Vicki Mee sharing their journey and why they have opted to run their 400 sows outdoors throughout the year. We also hear from the newly appointed Chairman of New Zealand Pork, Southland farmer, Eric Roy and his optimism for the industry which has certainly faced its challenges over recent years. Our third pig focused feature is around pig farming and the pork market. Founding members of the Canterbury Boar Breeders Association, Pleasant Point brothers, James and Henry Parse take us through the highs and lows of pig showing.

In addition to this, we also catch up with retiring Ruralco Director, Mark Saunders, who has stepped down from his role on the Board after six years. He tells us why he is proud of what has been achieved during that time and where the co-op is heading.

Canterbury based Straight 8 Estate winery is a unique vine-to-bottle vineyard which prides itself on providing real wine at real prices and is run by James Shand and Mary Jamieson. They tell us about their passion for delivering award winning wines, despite being small players in a big industry.

This issue of Real Farmer also takes a look at mental health and initiatives which have been devised to raise awareness and offer support. We meet the very courageous Elle Perriam who lost her boyfriend to suicide almost a year ago, and who has come up with a creative campaign featuring Jess, a big black Huntaway dog as the mascot for her "Will to Live" suicide awareness campaign. And we also have a message from All Black Sam Whitelock on managing stress and the merits of Farmstrong, a rural well-being programme aimed at helping farmers and farming families to live well so they can farm well.

On that note of well-being and looking out for each other, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and safe festive season with family and friends and we wish you all the best for 2019.

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

## RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

**RURALCO NZ LIMITED**  
PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740  
0800 RURALNZ (787 256)  
[www.ruralco.co.nz](http://www.ruralco.co.nz)

**EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES:**  
Our team welcome your contributions, enquiries and letters.  
Please email to:  
[marketing@ruralco.co.nz](mailto:marketing@ruralco.co.nz)

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

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*Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Ruralco.*

### CONTRIBUTORS

Anita Body  
Annie Studholme  
Niamh McCarthy  
Richard Rennie

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Amy Piper  
Annie Studholme  
Hele Power

### TECHNICAL ARTICLES

Ballance Agri-Nutrients  
Tel 0800 787 256  
[ruralco@ruralco.co.nz](mailto:ruralco@ruralco.co.nz)  
[www.ruralco.co.nz](http://www.ruralco.co.nz)

Barenbrug Agriseeds  
Tel 0800787256  
[ruralco@ruralco.co.nz](mailto:ruralco@ruralco.co.nz)  
[www.ruralco.co.nz](http://www.ruralco.co.nz)

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[info@dairynz.co.nz](mailto:info@dairynz.co.nz)  
[www.dairynz.co.nz](http://www.dairynz.co.nz)

FAR  
Tel 03 3455783  
[far@far.org.nz](mailto:far@far.org.nz)  
[www.far.org.nz](http://www.far.org.nz)

Farmstrong  
[info@farmstrong.co.nz](mailto:info@farmstrong.co.nz)  
[www.farmstrong.co.nz](http://www.farmstrong.co.nz)

Horticulture NZ  
Mike Chapman, CEO  
Horticulture New Zealand  
Tel 04 472 3795  
[mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz](mailto:mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz)  
[www.hortnz.co.nz](http://www.hortnz.co.nz)

Irrigation NZ  
Tel 03 341 2225  
[admin@irrigationnz.co.nz](mailto:admin@irrigationnz.co.nz)  
[www.irrigationnz.co.nz](http://www.irrigationnz.co.nz)

Lincoln University  
Tel 0800 10 60 10  
[info@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:info@lincoln.ac.nz)  
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[www.ruralco.co.nz](http://www.ruralco.co.nz)

Tracey Gordon  
Ruralco Energy Account  
Manager  
Tel 0800 787 256  
[Tracey.Gordon@ruralco.co.nz](mailto:Tracey.Gordon@ruralco.co.nz)  
[www.ruralco.co.nz](http://www.ruralco.co.nz)

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Tel 0800 800 123  
[www.spark.co.nz](http://www.spark.co.nz)

Ian Hodge  
VetEnt Riverside Ashburton  
Tel 03 308 2321  
[riverside@vetent.co.nz](mailto:riverside@vetent.co.nz)  
[www.vetent.co.nz](http://www.vetent.co.nz)



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Hamish & Vicki Mee from  
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IMAGE: Canterbury pig farmers Hamish and Vicki Mee are working hard to create their own niche for quality pork

# Homegrown pork holds its own

The pork industry is a tough one to be in, but Canterbury pig farmers Hamish and Vicki Mee have taken the challenges on the chin and are working hard to create their own niche for quality pork in a market flooded with lower grade, imported products.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER & HELE POWER

Hamish and Vicki are 25 years into the pig farming business and agree the challenges now are greater than they have ever been as the sector grapples with 1,350 tonne a week of imported product arriving across the country's borders.

Then there is a constant disease risk, and the push of costs on their slim margins. For the Mee's, the pressure is heightened because of the farming system they have chosen, typically known as the "free farm" pork system.

In contrast to a 100% indoor operation the Mee's run their 400 sows outdoors on 22ha throughout the year, each with their own breeding hut and area to roam around freely. When their piglets have made weaning weight they will be moved in groups of 130 to straw floored finishing barns to grow to their required 80kg weight targets.

The couple are not ardently anti the modern 100% indoor approach to pig farming, but have opted for the system they have due in part to Hamish growing up on a sheep farm. He was simply accustomed to seeing stock reared outdoors and figured pigs should be no different. They started back in 1994 with only 36 young sows and some breeding boars, building the herd within six months to 100 sows and selling the weaned piglets.

"I trained as a carpenter but had always been keen to go farming. The biggest obstacle though was the cost of the land, so we started off leasing some land off the family on the home farm.

"The challenge today setting up this system is of course the cost of the land. At \$40,000 to \$50,000 a hectare, it would be pretty hard to justify putting pigs on it."

By 2000 their breeding sow numbers had doubled and they decided to move into weaner fattening themselves. They were able to expand, in part thanks to a very



successful equity partnership with David and Sonia Molloy of Molloy Agriculture.

Four years ago thanks to some steady reinvestment of profit and strong land value gains, Vicki and Hamish were able to buy David and Sonia out.

"It is a great example of how a good partnership can work well, and certainly helped us get to where we are now."

ABOVE: Pigs are weaned at four weeks of age and moved to the weaning barns  
TOP: The Mee's have experimented with many different farrowing huts over the years

Today the 400 sows they run produce about 180 piglets a week with each sow having 2.3 litters a year with 11 piglets weaned per litter. The weaners typically take four months



to leave at 80kg after coming in at 8kg. Hamish is careful not to make their system appear easier than it is, and in fact it presents a number of challenges in an already tough business.

“Running sows this way, you have to accept your piglet mortality will be higher due to sows rolling onto their piglets- we don’t have the sow crates you will find on conventional farms that prevent that happening.”

Meantime conception rates can vary more than on conventional farms due to temperature variability, and feed costs are higher because pigs typically require 10% more feed to achieve desired weight gains similar to conventionally reared pigs.

The system also requires four full time staff, plus Hamish and Vicki, compared to about three for a conventional indoor system which occupies only about 1ha, compared to their 22ha land area.

Bedding costs for the weaners’ barn system which runs them in groups of 130 per barn, are also significant. The couple grow a triticale crop on 100ha of dryland cropping land specifically for the straw and grain it delivers for the pig operation.

“The straw produced from the crops is equivalent in value of two tonne of grain per hectare and it covers most for our straw needs.”

Bedding costs in total amount to the equivalent of 2,000 round bales of straw.

Despite the differences to conventional indoor operations Hamish defends the system’s use of the crates, currently under review by the government and the hypocrisy that sits behind any attempts to ban them, whilst still allowing imported pork.

“The reality is that those countries we are importing pork from, including North America, Asia and some European countries all still allow the use of sow crates.”

He maintains that regardless of the system used, New Zealand has the highest standard

of pig welfare in the world, with the PigCare programme only enhancing that further (see accompanying article).

Despite extensive work to identify alternative methods, the industry has struggled to come up with alternatives and Hamish suspects ultimately it may be their free farmed approach that will dominate sow breeding operations in the future.

At present this is a significant portion of the industry, with free farmed pork amounting to about 45% of the entire New Zealand industry.

The Mee’s have worked hard to keep their environmental footprint to a minimum, with a third of their grain produced on the farm. They have been able to reduce their nutrient losses by 40% in recent years, meaning they are well above the 20% reduction by 2020 required by Environment Canterbury.

“And as a protein production system, pork is actually very environmentally friendly. Sows are super productive, with one sow

producing 2 tonne of carcass weight a year. To achieve the same return off breeding ewes that we get here you would need 28,000 of them. Pigs are also mono-gastric, so they emit very little methane and all up are highly efficient protein generators.”

While still supplying Freedom Farms the couple have also just launched their own range of bacon and ham products. They have started off with a focus on the local market, providing an online ordering system, with orders being picked up every Thursday at Undercoat Gallery in Methven.

Born in part out of frustration at the quality of imported product on the market, and a belief in their own, they are using Facebook to promote their quality bacon and ham and to educate consumers about what constitutes good bacon.

“A lot that is imported has as much weight again as water in it, and it often leaves consumers disappointed when they cook it, only to find it has shrunk and is spattering in the pan as the water leaves it.”

They ensure their bacon is made based on the original meat’s weight and not increased at all, offering better flavour and eating experience and a superb smoked aroma.

This has been achieved beautifully by Paddy Kennedy of Allenton Meat Centre, who the Mee’s have chosen as their hand-crafted butcher. Paddy also offers fresh Le Mee pork within his butchery for sale to his customers.

Their “pig friendly” operation also lends itself well to social media, with the couple aiming to make regular posts of activity on the farm.

Meantime one large supermarket chain has opted to go with exclusively free farmed fresh pork, and Hamish and Vicki are hoping the tide may be turning when it comes to

ABOVE: Pregnant sows enjoying the green grass and mountain views  
BELOW: Pigs are kept in eco barns from 11 weeks of age till finishing



consumers wanting a quality product that delivers on sustainability, locality and of course taste.

“Basically, people are keen to know more about where their food comes from, and that it is produced sustainably and locally and we can keep the price realistic by selling it to them direct.”

## PigCare gets consumers' tick

Like the majority of New Zealand commercial pig farmers, the Mees are part of the industry's quality PigCare programme that aims to help New Zealand pork products stand out from lesser quality overseas imported products.

With almost 60% of pork products sold in New Zealand now coming from overseas, the domestic industry has gone to great lengths to work with New Zealand consumers to understand what it is that will motivate them to buy local.

Having high standards for animal and environmental care have been a key to this, and since 2009 the industry has been working with industry experts, vets, scientists, farmers and the Ministry for Primary Industries to develop its world class PigCare programme.

The PigCare initiative offers assurance to consumers that the pork they are consuming has come from pigs that have been raised with a focus on their welfare. Today the New Zealand pig farming industry,



comprising of around 100 commercial farms has over 95% of its production covered by the PigCare programme.

The roll out of the PigCare programme means farmers who are PigCare accredited meet key standards of animal care and farming expertise.

These are underpinned by an ongoing programme of independent auditing and verification to ensure the programme

ABOVE: The Le Mee Farms branded pork products  
BELOW: Birds eye view of the Le Mee Farm in Methven

remains robust and transparent, giving consumers peace of mind it is more than simply another label claim on a packet. At a retail level the PigCare programme links in with the 2017 initiative to develop a pork “trust mark”. This includes developing digital and print media marketing and recipe guides alongside targeted commercial activity focusing on such events as Chinese New Year and Mother’s Day.

“With the PigCare programme we are able to offer an assurance to consumers about the welfare and quality of life our pigs have enjoyed. That is something that a pork product from an unknown overseas source simply does not offer,” says NZ Pork chairman Eric Roy.

“Almost 60% of pork products consumed in New Zealand are now imported, most of which come from countries producing pig meat using systems and practices that would be illegal under New Zealand’s welfare standards,” he says.

One area the industry see further opportunity with the PigCare programme is the way it can be used to reflect the environmental standards and initiatives employed by farmers. Working with local authorities around New Zealand, NZ Pork is helping extend it into other areas of farm compliance. Reinforcing the PigCare trust mark, NZ Pork has also been working hard to support Country of Origin Labelling, submitting to the select committee to support a bill that will help reinforce the work the industry itself has done to build greater consumer loyalty to New Zealand sourced quality product.



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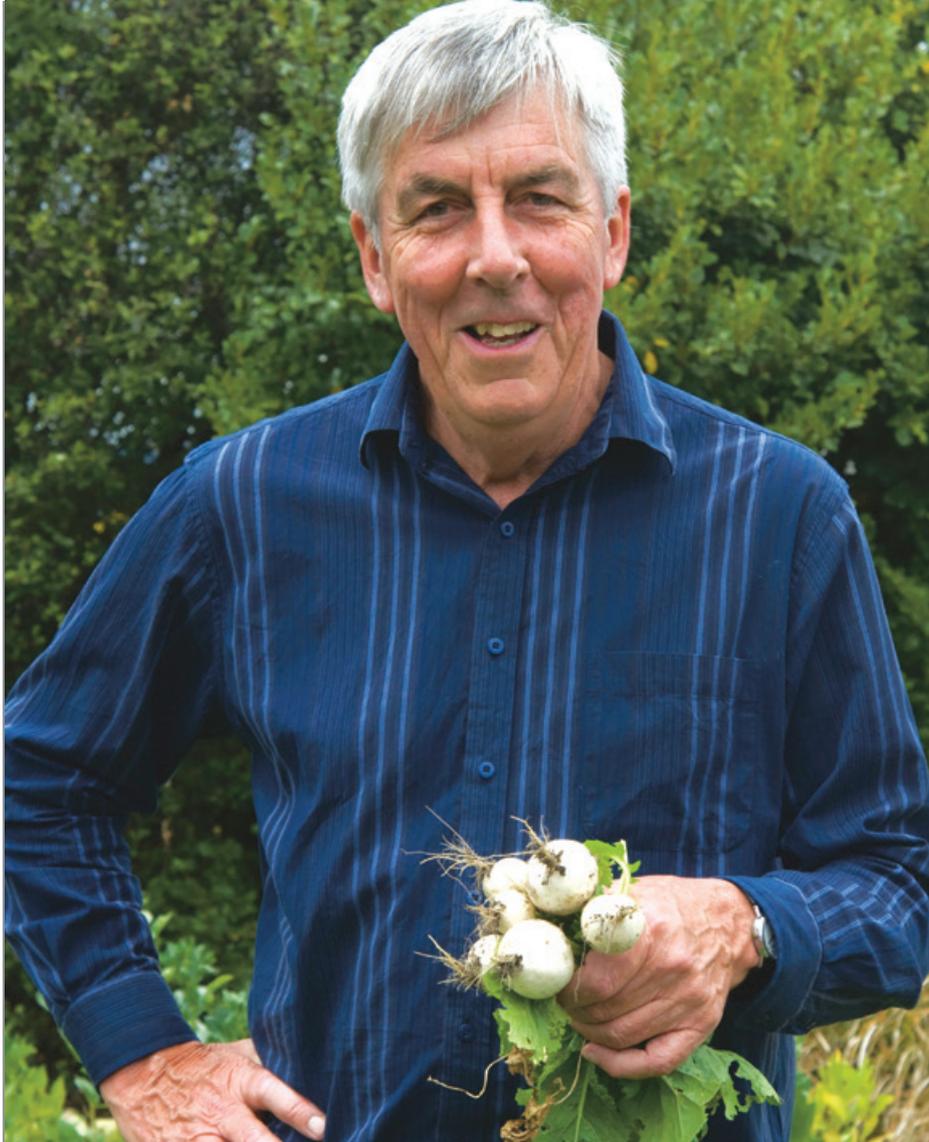
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# Research looking at improving bee health and resistance to pests



**Lincoln University Ecology Professor Steve Wratten is addressing one of the major biodiversity challenges facing the future of agriculture: threats to bee populations and their pollination efficacy.**

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

"Agriculture has inadvertent but major negative consequences, including a severe impact on biodiversity, human health and the environment," Professor Wratten said. He said the idea of sustainable intensification was now being advocated by the world's policy makers. This is a system in which agricultural yields are increased while minimising adverse environmental impact. Professor Wratten, a world-leading researcher in agro-ecology, will employ a vital new

approach to the understanding and enhancement of pollinator populations.

This approach is based on the recent discovery that the pollen of some flower species does not have an appropriate ratio of nutrients for bee health, particularly with respect to sodium. This element, along with others such as potassium, calcium, magnesium, and iron, are vital for the health of pollinators.

"Currently, when floral mixtures are selected to improve bee health, no account is taken of the pollen nutrient composition."

He will analyse the chemical composition of pollens in a range of plant species to assess their suitability to bees and other pollinating insects. He will also develop science-based drinking water for bees, supplemented with a balanced mixture of soil-derived minerals to provide the nutrients appropriate for bee health.

These research methods also have the potential to increase bee resistance to pathogens and parasites, including the Varroa mite, thereby addressing some of the causes of bee population decline.

This novel approach employed by Professor Wratten can provide world-class management protocols for bees and other pollinating insects for deployment in bee keeping, and beyond.

"The project will serve the burgeoning bee economy in New Zealand, an industry which currently has approximately one million honey bee hives but which has suffered somewhat from a lack of focused research for optimal management," he said.

Professor Wratten also has a focus in his research on the biological control of pests.

He is a proponent of using crop and non-crop plants to provide SNAP—Shelter, Nectar, Alternative food and Pollen—to natural enemies of pests.

This approach restores and enhances ecosystem services or 'nature's services' in agriculture, thereby improving the environment and enhancing biological control of pests.

He has pioneered the use of non-native and endemic New Zealand plant species in agriculture to enhance insect pest control and in this way reduce insecticide use.

The methods developed by his team and trialled in the Waipara wine-growing region in Canterbury, New Zealand are now in use in every vineyard region in New Zealand and Australia, as well as regions of the United States and Europe.

Lincoln University's ecology courses cover biological diversity, molecular evolution, conservation, agroecology and wildlife management, among a range of topics.

Agroecology is the science of sustainable agriculture, focussing on current issues in the agricultural environment and the role of ecosystem functions and services. Alternative approaches to ensuring the sustainability of future farming practices.

Post-graduate course Conservation Biology is based on a case study of Mt Grand, the Lincoln University high country station in Central Otago that has recently undergone tenure review.

It provides an opportunity to study areas of protected biodiversity alongside areas managed for sheep grazing, both of which confront a range of environmental issues that includes control of mammalian pests and weed invasion.

For more information on studying Ecology at Lincoln University go to [www.lincoln.ac.nz/consecol](http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/consecol).

ABOVE: Lincoln University Ecology Professor, Steve Wratten



# Will to live a campaign from the heart

Jess, a big black Huntaway from down south has become the mascot for a campaign aimed at saving the lives of young men and woman working throughout New-Zealand's beautiful but remote hinterland, sometimes with only the likes of Jess for company.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ELLE PERRIAM

Lincoln University student and keen shepherd Elle Perriam has taken a creative, passionate approach to dealing with the severe and recent loss of her boyfriend Will to suicide almost a year ago. She has duly recruited Will's cherished Huntaway Jess to head up her "Will to Live" suicide awareness campaign.

However, unlike the symbolic black dog of depression, Jess is a symbol of hope and inspiration for a generation of young rural people often blighted by the condition.

Appropriately she took centre stage at the campaign's launch, held at the Hunterville Huntaway Festival, home of the "Shepherd's Shemozzle" in late October.

The tough race for shepherds and their Huntaway dogs is a much anticipated annual event, combining many competitions and activities. It brings together many rural

folk from the back country community to celebrate the quiet foot soldiers and canine servants of New Zealand's farming industry.

Elle says Will's death last December came out of the blue, leaving a trail of emotional devastation that ripped outwards from his immediate family to the entire close knit community.

As she picked over the grief of his loss, she resolved to pull something positive from the wretched experience, and got together with Will's sister Sam and his good friend Adam Williams.

She also called on the media experience of RadioLIVE's Rural Exchange co-host and her sister Sarah to raise awareness about the appalling rate of young male suicide in New Zealand.

A recent survey underlined the reality of what Elle and her friends had experienced first-hand.

The State of the Rural Nation Survey released in early October highlighted the younger generation (18-39 year olds) of rural New Zealanders were most affected by an overall elevated level of rural stress and anxiety.

Perhaps surprisingly 85% of this age bracket said they had felt more stress in the past five years, significantly more than those over 55.

Worryingly, rural respondents were also significantly less likely than their urban cousins to consider talking to a health professional when experiencing signs of stress or anxiety.

A key focus of Will to Live is to encourage this group to feel comfortable talking about mental health problems and encouraging them to seek help from whatever source proves most effective, either through positive personal activities, or by talking and



interacting with others who can empathise with their issues.

"We were originally going to hold Will to Live sessions through about 10 locations nationwide, but with overwhelming generosity of individuals and sponsors we are now aiming for 14 events throughout New Zealand, probably somewhere social like at the local pub and if we raise more funds we may be able to hold even more meetings."

A Pledge Me campaign has helped make this possible, with over \$15,000 being raised towards the cause.

"We intend to have two or three speakers, where people can get to hear from a mental health expert on the mechanics of depression and anxiety, and from someone who is a suitable ambassador for the issue, known in that area."

"It could be a local farmer, a stock agent, it doesn't really matter what they do, as long as they are relatable—we want to keep the meetings accessible and relaxed."

She is focussing on helping eliminate one of the main reasons young rural males in particular don't seek help, and that is lack of accessibility.

Elle has already secured Ruralco and AllFlex as two key corporate sponsors and is confident more companies will come on board with a campaign aimed at making life better for the next generation of farmers.

"We have been bowled over with the response since we initially posted our Will to Live video.

We felt that by telling our own story people could relate to the campaign better, and they have. We have had complete strangers come up to us and it has been amazing how comfortable people have been talking to us when they know we have been through the same thing they have."

Rural mental health has received significantly greater attention in the past couple of years, thanks in part to the Farmstrong campaign.

But Elle says her demographic subset of the rural sector has tended to be overlooked and the statistics for them have taken many by surprise.

"Earlier on the statistics tended to highlight an older group of farmers who were affected as owners or managers. But the numbers show it's this younger group really affected, and when it comes to young rural males in particular, you simply are not going to get them ringing an 0800 hotline for help. I know Will simply would not have done that."

And often being hours from the nearest mental health professional means seeking someone out is far from easy, or timely.

She hopes the campaign's sessions will encourage young males in particular to recognise the signs that are the catalyst for suicidal thoughts, and give them some simple tools to respond to that recognition.

"Whether that is going fishing or hunting after work, catching up with friends somewhere off the farm, or getting away for a break, everyone has ways to cope and it is just getting them to put them into practice."

ABOVE LEFT: Elle Perriam with her late boyfriend Will's cherished huntaway Jess, the face of her Will to Live" suicide campaign

ABOVE: Elle and Will's good friend Adam Williams, resolved to pull something positive from the wretched experience

Social media is inevitably playing a big part in helping with the campaign, and keep the scattered and remote workers in touch with one another.

"Using a platform like Instagram is not only a way to keep in touch, but it gets people thinking about their job in a positive way, and posting a picture of a day on the job gives them a chance to show 'this is where I live, this is what I really enjoy doing.'"

Elle has a reasonably good pool of people to call on for the South Island leg of the tour but is also keen to talk to potential ambassadors in the North Island who may have a story to share with their peers.

Longer term she's hoping to do a tour every year and get to more communities each time. Meanwhile she says the process of getting the Will to Live campaign together has been a positive process to help her deal with the grief of Will's loss.

"If we can do something that is positive, and helps others before they get to that point, then we have definitely succeeded."

To learn more, or to support Will to Live, visit: [www.pledgeme.co.nz/projects/5842-will-to-live-speak-up-tour-2019](http://www.pledgeme.co.nz/projects/5842-will-to-live-speak-up-tour-2019) or visit their Facebook page: Will To Live

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# Protective systems vital to a dog's health



## Dogs have three main protective systems that work together to protect, support and promote health and wellbeing.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY PURINA

These protective systems are:

1. Skin and coat;
2. Digestive;
3. Immune system.

The skin is the largest organ in the body with a variety of protective functions, including providing a physical barrier for the rest of the body against the external environment.

The digestive system works to protect the dog in two ways. The first is by digesting and absorbing essential nutrients that can be utilised by it and the other protective systems to promote overall health and wellbeing.

Secondly, the digestive system plays an immunologic role to defend against bacteria and toxins that have entered the body. The digestive system is the primary site for the body's immune system response containing as much as 70% of the body's immune cells.

Each of these three systems operates at its peak efficiency only when supplied with vital nutrients at an appropriate level from the dog's diet.

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## Protein

Is essential as exercise increases the body's need for protein, which is used for tissue maintenance and repair.

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# Weaning ideal time to Body Condition Score



**Weaning is the ideal time to Body Condition Score ewes as it allows valuable summer feed resources to be partitioned into ewes that need a lift before mating.**

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND

Beef + Lamb New Zealand's General Manager South Island John Ladley says Body Condition Scoring is a cheap yet extremely valuable management tool that can result in significant savings in feed and improved flock performance.

Poor condition ewes (less than BCS 3) at mating are less likely to get pregnant in the first 17 days of breeding, they will have lower scanning percentages and will have less buffering in late pregnancy and lactation resulting in lighter lambs at weaning.

John says the key drivers of profit in a sheep flock are kilograms of lamb weaned per hectare, weaning weight per lamb and the number of lambs weaned per hectare—and ewe Body Condition impacts on all three.

Ideally, ewes should be maintained at a BCS of 3.5 all year round, but lactation, pregnancy, mob pressure and competition for feed will see some ewes falling below this.

"Body Condition Scoring at weaning, mating and scanning will allow those lighter ewes to be identified so they can be priority fed or culled.

"It's about minimising the number of tail-end ewes as these are the ones

that are bringing down the overall flock performance."

John says BCS is a way of comparing sheep independent of frame-size, liveweight, breed, gut fill and stage of gestation. It relates to the production ability of sheep regardless of body weight.

It is done by assessing the amount of body fat by feeling the vertical (spine) and horizontal (short ribs) processes.

This is done by placing a hand behind the thirteenth rib, pushing fingers under the short ribs with pressure and finger on the spine.

BCS is based on a scale of one to five, one being very skinny and emaciated and five being too fat.

John says it's not about getting exact numbers, rather identifying those that fall below an optimum condition of 3.5.

Wairarapa farmer Sam Johnston has been Body Condition Scoring his ewe flock for nine years now and is sold on the benefits of this low-cost management tool.

Sam learnt to Body Condition Score during the grips of a drought and has used it to drop ewe numbers, use feed resources more efficiently and increase productivity.

He is now mentoring and encouraging other farmers to adopt Body Condition

Scoring and says it is valuable tool regardless of the season.

"I made the decision to start Body Condition Scoring in a drought, but if you do it in a good year, it will really make a difference."

Sam says tugging, scanning and weaning are the ideal times for Body Condition Scoring. At scanning each ewe is being pushed up onto crate so it is the ideal time to put a hand on them and score them.

Feed resources, are typically tight at the end of winter and early spring, can then be partitioned into the ewes that need it most.

"It's about having the right feed at the right time for the right sheep."

While Sam is a veteran of the practice—and now bases all of his management decisions around ewe Body Condition Scores—he says he is still refining the system.

He encourages farmers to take small steps and not to expect huge changes straight away—rather they will benefit from incremental changes over time.

"If you're lambing 120% you are not going to lambing 150% straight away and similarly adding one to two kilos in lamb weaning weight is a massive change over 90 days—but it is all achievable through more targeted feeding," he says.

Beef + Lamb New Zealand has a number of resources about Body Condition Scoring on its website: [www.beeflambnz.com/search?term=Body+Condition+Scoring](http://www.beeflambnz.com/search?term=Body+Condition+Scoring)

Body Condition Workshops can be organised in your area by contacting your local Beef + Lamb New Zealand Extension Manager

ABOVE: Sam Johnston bases all of his management decisions on Body Condition Scores  
BELOW: Beef + Lamb New Zealand's General Manager South Island John Ladley says weaning is an ideal time to Body Condition Score ewes





# First Ruralco bonus rebate for six years

For the first time in six years Ruralco will pay its owners a bonus rebate thanks to increased revenue growth and careful management of expenses. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

The \$500,000 bonus rebate comes on the back of a strong year for the rural services co-operative, Ruralco (wholly owned by ATS), which recorded operating earnings before interest and depreciation of \$1.4m—the most significant post by the co-operative for several years.

During the last financial year Ruralco continued to increase its market share while also focusing on efficiencies within the business, generating an operating surplus

before bonus rebates of \$870k—more than double last year's result.

"These figures represent a very positive year for the co-operative, a year in which we have grown our market share not only within Mid Canterbury but also nationally," said Chairman, Alister Body.

"The gain has come through careful discipline and investment in technology leading to efficiencies being applied to co-operative cost structures, while also seeing revenue

growth nurtured across all business units. This has been achieved not only at a local level through our rural trading outlets, but also nationally as Ruralco's business, including its card supplier network, has expanded and thrived throughout the country. This network continues to go from strength to strength and is a valued part of our co-op."

Strategically and at a governance level the co-operative has been unwavering in its focus to become the partner of choice for



rural New Zealand. “We are growing with the industry and our purpose is to help drive the industry forward through shared savings, shared innovation and learnings. We are better together, growing the value for our owners,” said Alister.

“These figures represent a very positive year for the co-operative, a year in which we have grown our market share not only within Mid Canterbury but also nationally.”

“Board diversity, through the appointment of two independent directors who work alongside farmer elected directors, and a strategic focus which sees collaboration between Ruralco management and the Board means we are all working together, sharing a commitment to the co-op model and its future.”

It’s proving to be a winning formula which saw six high calibre Director candidates standing at this year’s Director Election with Kate Acland and Gabrielle Thompson being elected onto the two Board seats.

Mid Canterbury based Kate Acland joins the Board bringing a wealth of knowledge in the sheep & beef, deer, dairy, bee and viticulture sectors. In addition to her governance experience in her own businesses, Kate currently holds several outside governance roles; sitting on the Board of Beef + Lamb NZ as Associate Director as well as being Director of North Canterbury Future Farms. “I am honoured and grateful to be elected amongst such a strong field of candidates and I’m looking forward to the challenge of serving the shareholders.”

Familiar face at the Board table Gabrielle Thompson has been successfully re-elected “I’m proud to continue representing the Ruralco Shareholders and look forward to contributing around the board table with my usual enthusiasm.”

ABOVE: Gabrielle Thompson re-elected and Kate Acland joins the Ruralco Board  
 ABOVE LEFT: Shareholders support the 2018 Board of Director nominees

“I’m delighted with the election outcome and looking forward to working with our new Director and continuing to work with Gabrielle who has added great value in her previous tenures” commented Chairman Alister Body. Looking forward, the co-op will continue its focus on developing its people and their pride and passion for working with Ruralco’s owners and suppliers to best serve rural New Zealand.

“I’m delighted with the election outcome and looking forward to working with our new Director and continuing to work with Gabrielle.”



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# Children on Farm

When you're a farmer, your farm forms part of your home, which extends past the fence around the back garden. WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS

When you have children, this farm is part of their home environment and they will help around the farm and eventually, have their own work on farm. A farm is a wonderful place for children to grow up with their family and provides valuable and unique experiences. This generation of children are our next generation of farmers after all. However, we must be mindful that farms are also workplaces, and evidence shows that this places our children at a greater risk of injury when playing or helping around the farm. As we head into summer, we tend to see an increase in these accidents involving children on farm—as we already have seen some tragic accidents in the last couple of months.

Let's just take a moment to review the legal side of this. The Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016, Part 4, section 43 states that a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no worker aged under 15 years carries out any work of a type that is likely to cause harm to the health and safety of a person aged under 15 years. Part 47 states that a worker aged 12 years or over can drive or ride on a tractor if the tractor is being used in connection with agricultural work; and the worker has been fully trained in the safe operation of the tractor and the safe use of any implement that is being drawn by or is attached to the tractor; or is being trained in the safe operation of the tractor or the safe use

of any implement that is being drawn by or is attached to the tractor.

Now that we have that out of the way—let's talk about what actually happens! A comment we often hear is that farmers believe that because their children have grown up on farm, they understand the risks, and so they are safe. However, children are not only physical smaller, they see the world differently to adults and are not always as rational, cautious or able to foresee unsafe situations the same way we do. Even if they might appear competent or have been given rules they still should not be expected to fully comprehend all that entails. Children are also naturally inquisitive, meaning they'll often get in where they shouldn't, just, well, because! While they will learn and develop farm safety skills as they grow, the safety of our children is always an adult responsibility—a shared responsibility of farm owners, managers and farm workers.

So practically, what could we be doing to keep our children safe while on farm?

- Walk around the farm with your children and identify what might be dangerous together and talk about it;
- Lead by example when it comes to keeping safe;
- Think about having safety fences/covers around animal pens, work areas and water, etc;
- Keep doors locked so children can't get in where they shouldn't;
- Store agrichemicals out of children's reach;

- Remove keys from doors and vehicles when not in use;
- Children should not ride on tractors, quad bikes or on the back of utes—one seat, one rider rule;
- Make sure children wear high-visibility clothing when out and about on farm;
- Teach children to wash their hands after touching animals;
- Make sure children ride bikes that are appropriate for their age and height and have the right gear;
- Make sure children know what to do in an emergency: what to do, where to go and who to call. Teach children basic first aid;
- Make it a rule for older children to always say where they are going;
- Keep equipment and tools secured;
- Make sure everyone working on farm is aware that children are present.

We need this generation of farm kids to grow up to be the next generation milking the cows and farming the land, so as we head into summer, just take a minute to review how you deal with the kids on your farm. The days of kids riding on tractor wheel arches is long gone, let's not replace it with something that in the future, means we must deal with a tragic accident in our own backyards.

If you have any questions or if you'd like to ring and have a good debate about this, then give Compliance Partners a call on 0800 BIZSAFE.

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IMAGE: James Shand and Mary Jamieson

# Pouring years of experience into a seriously drinkable wine

In an industry dominated by large companies and big brands, Canterbury-based Straight 8 Estate winery is a unique vine-to-bottle vineyard that prides itself on producing real wine at real prices.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

Nestled in the heart of the Canterbury Plains in the Selwyn district, an area better known for its fat lambs and crops, lies Straight 8 Estate, a small “straight up” vineyard run by James Shand and Mary Jamieson, that aims to deliver consistent, honest, award-winning wines crafted entirely from their own grapes.

But despite their undeniable passion for growing grapes, great sense of humour, and hardworking spirit, they’re realistic. “We all know the industry is run by the big boys and big brands,” says James. “It’s very hard because we are competing with the big boys, the corporates, and they have to sell their product as well. So, every time they get squeezed, we get squeezed. It’s a very tricky formula to market wine and to be successful at it. One day I may get there, but at the moment, it’s a pretty uphill battle.”

When James and Mary turned their backs on 30 successful years in the food industry to buy the vineyard in 2004, they were under no illusion of the challenges that lay ahead.

Both brought up on farms, James farmed with his father for a number of years in Fairlie but left the industry to go into food. To start with they ran the local fish and chip shop for 10 years, before selling up and moving to Christchurch, where they operated a host of successful industrial food bars. Deep down though, James yearned to return to farming.

“I wanted to grow something, something that had a bit of my personality in it, and I wanted a challenge. Everyone can be a farmer, but not everyone can grow grapes. At the time, I joked that I didn’t have the five or six million dollars to buy a dairy farm or the one to two million dollars for a sheep or beef farm. There was also a bit of family history there; my grandfather was a brewer, owning James Shand & Co, who made beer during the prohibition.”

So they went in search for a vineyard, eventually purchasing an 8ha old style planting at Burnham. Although central



Canterbury isn’t favoured as a wine growing region today, back in the 1980s pioneering winemakers touted it as the next big thing, with the Giesen brothers planting more than 20ha. Small contract blocks (like this one) were in high demand.

James and Mary’s block was planted over a five-to eight year period initially by Willy Codyre, and later the Gall family, containing a mix of wide plantings of pinot noir, chardonnay and riesling grapes, as well as the southern-most plantings of cabernet franc. As its grapes had only ever been sold on contract, James and Mary had to set about creating their own unique brand.

ABOVE: A small “straight up” vineyard run by James Shand & Mary Jamieson

TOP: Out of the four varieties, Straight 8 Estate can make nine to 10 different lines of wine

“It was just a vineyard. It had no name and no branding,” explains James.

In an industry that’s dominated by flashy labels and prominent marketing, getting the right name and brand was crucial. Given so many wineries named after their location, being on State Highway 1 just 6km south of Rolleston, James and Mary wanted something a bit more unconventional.



ABOVE: James Shand and Mary Jamieson aim to deliver consistent, honest, award-winning wines crafted entirely from their own grapes  
BELOW: The unmistakable sign on the main road from Christchurch to Ashburton

Utilising an expert designer with years of experience in the wine industry, they scrutinised many potential options. But they kept coming back to Straight 8 Estate, named after the 'straight 8' engine of their 1935 Light Sports Railton classic vintage racing car that's been in James' family for more than half a century. Not just a showpiece, the car is still used to this day, and takes pride of place just inside the cellar door.

"I liked cars and I like wine," laughs James. "Motoring is just like the wine industry; it's dominated by the big names - Mercedes, Bentley. We are the underdog, and I've always liked the underdog. I liked the car and I felt that there was a lot of family history that it strung together. It seemed like a good fit."

When James and Mary took over in 2004, admittedly they had a lot to learn. "We didn't know a lot back then, but I was lucky that I had some fundamental farming skills and I knew about chemicals. I knew the most important thing for making wine, was the soil. It took us 10 years to bring the soils back to where they needed to be after being raped a pillaged for years as a contract block. There wasn't a worm in the ground when we first started, now they're everywhere."

While they can't be classified as certified organic, Mary says they aim to farm as biologically safe as they can, focusing on optimum soil management to produce healthy crops in a sustainable fashion with minimal chemical use.

They use fertigation to apply dissolved fertilisers directly at the grapevine's roots, sheep for leaf plucking the vines to allow in more light and prevent fungal infections, and to help keep grass down between the rows, and rely on heavy winter frosts to clean up disease and keep the weeds at bay. But given Canterbury's penchant for hot, dry summers, coupled with their drier, shingley-soils, they usually can't get away without the use of any irrigation.

Where needed, they bring in seasonal workers to help at certain times of the year, but in reality, each and every plant is tended, grown and nurtured by James and Mary - all 17,500 of them. "These are the main hands. These are the hands that talk to the bank manager, the hands that grow it, pick the

grapes and make the wine, and the hands that sell it," explains James. "There is a little piece of us in every bottle."

Growing grapes is a very labour intensive process. In any given season James can make 20-25 passes through the vineyard from mowing, mulching back into the ground, weed spray, vine spray, dragging nets over and off the vines, shoot thinning, significant pruning and harvesting. While the introduction of machine-pickers has decreased the work involved at harvest, they still hand pick the cabernet franc.

Unlike the majority of vineyard operators, James works everything out on a plant value basis. "If you ask most vineyard proprietors, they can't tell you how many plants they have, but I'm always working out volumes, what we want on a crop level. Spraying, various other things. It's the numbers at the end of the day that make the vineyard basically. Everything goes back to the plant value."

Straight 8 Estate's first vintage, hit the open market in 2006 with a mixed response. Over the past 14 years they've updated their label three times, keeping up with current trends.

For the first 10 years all its wine was made by a contract winemaker, but in 2014, James and Mary brought the entire production back to Straight 8 Estate and with the help of an expert winemaker, James assumed the responsibility of principle winemaker.

"It was the only way for us to have control of our wine," says Mary. "It gave us the flexibility to be able to try and make as much variety out of what we actually grow as we can. Out of the four varieties, we can make nine to 10 different lines of wine. Now, it's 99 per cent of our grapes in the bottle."

However, to produce successful single vineyard wines is more of an art than the larger scale commercial operations. "It's been a steep learning curve. It's really difficult to make wines that are seriously drinkable and consistent in a marginal area for growing grapes (like Burnham)," explains James.



"We are like the humble peasant winemaker. We make wine from growing grapes, not, make wine from grapes. We have to deal with what the season gives us. It's crafted from what we grow, allowing for the particular characteristics of the soil and vines to be expressed, season to season. If it's a bad season we have to use our ability and skills to craft a decent wine as we don't have a lot of blending options. Depending on the season, sometimes it's not worth even picking the grapes; in 2017 we left some of the varieties on the vines."

Straight 8 Estate produces a range of different wines to suit all tastes including chardonnay, two styles of award-winning Riesling, pinot noir, and Rosè all priced between \$18–22. They prefer to stick to a simple natural winemaking process, crafting it in small batches from 500–5,000l tanks and basic filtration.

Since their inaugural vintage, Straight 8 Estate has developed a loyal following. Aside from online sales, a presence in some supermarkets,

and attending regular trade events, wine and food festivals and A&P shows, most of their sales come through their cellar door. Operational since 2012, the cellar door is open from 9am-6.30pm daily offering free wine tastings and while numbers through the door have steadily increased, it's still not enough.

"If we could sell a bottle of wine for all those who having been meaning to stop, we'd be creaming it. But those that do stop, tend to buy. Quite often it's not what they're expecting, but once they've got over the fact that we don't have any sauvignon blanc or pinot gris, they're pleasantly surprised. You are never going to please everyone but getting people to taste your wine is half the battle," says James.

In New Zealand, sauvignon blanc makes up more than 73 per cent of all grapes harvested. At the other end of the spectrum, riesling only made up less than 1 per cent, but James and Mary are committed to sticking with it.

"It's under-rated; it would beat a sauvignon blanc hands down," says James. "We don't have a problem hand-selling it if we are selling it through the cellar door, but liquor shops have a problem selling it to the mass public. There are a lot of people trying to do a whole lot of things with Riesling in the wine making situation."

James and Mary jumped on the bandwagon, choosing to carbonate a proportion of their Riesling. Named Fizzy Flappers, it's a ritzy, refreshing, low-alcohol bubbly made from a blend of medium and dry Riesling that's great for all occasions. "It's been quite successful for us and it's quite fun. We call it the lawn mowing special, when you have mowed the lawns at 4.30pm it's something you can drink pretty quickly and not particularly alcoholic."

While they can't afford to put out a \$10 bottle of wine in the shop (cellar door) for too long, they always try to have something on special. James says for a small producer like them with limited volume, \$10 is about breakeven point by the time you factor in all the costs including taxes (government gets about \$2.43/per bottle), the bottle, growing, pressing, making, labelling and boxes.

"The bigger volume, the cheaper it gets, but we don't want to get bigger. This is all we need for what we want to do. We've just got to produce consistently better wine."

On average Straight 8 Estate makes between 20-30,000 bottles of wine each year. "That's only 7,500 people buying four bottles of wine each to sell it all, which is completely do-able," says James.

James and Mary are in the same boat as many sheep, beef and crop farmers, struggling to get a revolving cash flow, but it's multiplied because everything hinges on one, single crop which is hugely seasonally dependent.

"Our problem is that cash goes out and not much comes back in. We have one crop and it pretty much takes 18 months before you get a saleable item, and sometimes it can take two or three years to sell the bottles of wine. We also have to carry a lot of stock as well," explains James. "To sell half a million dollars' worth of stock, you need to have 1 million dollars' worth of stock."

"People think owning a winery is a hobby, but it's serious. We still have bills to pay," says Mary. Many wine lovers have been seduced by the romantic ideals of owning a vineyard, but the reality is, it's dam hard work with little in the way of financial reward, says James.

But at the end of the day, this is their life. They don't have any children, they're in it for the long haul and they remain wildly passionate about growing grapes to make seriously drinkable, award-winning wine.



LEFT: Operational since 2012, the cellar door is open from 9am-6.30pm daily offering free wine tastings  
LEFT TOP: While they can't be classified as certified organic, Mary says they aim to farm as biologically safe as they can



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# Will increased compliance promote growth?

Compliance for growers is exponentially increasing and with this comes concerns about whether this will promote, or restrict, growth.

WORDS BY MIKE CHAPMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND. IMAGE SUPPLIED BY HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

A few examples include requirements under the Food Act, an avalanche of environmental requirements, Auckland's regional fuel tax, and consents required for changing the types of fruit and vegetables that are grown.

Extensive and complicated compliance rules and approval regimes have been imposed on growers, adding cost and time to their business before they can grow their vegetables and fruit. A significant example is reasonable access to water and water storage. We are told that climate change, in addition to causing increased adverse weather events, will also bring increased dry periods, especially on the eastern side of New Zealand. Plants need water to grow and enabling water storage and projects for aquifer recharge should be prioritised and supported by both regional and central government. Even the most simple water storage projects take years and thousands of dollars to just get to the stage of construction, so we need to be planning ahead. This is something that must be sorted out to enable us to feed New Zealand.

There are increased employment law requirements proposed in a series of Bills

being considered by Parliament. Our key submission is that New Zealand's employment law as it stands today is fit for purpose and, if there are any changes needed, increased enforcement and education are what is required. Forcing unionisation on newly employed workers and increasing the powers of unions to access work areas will not improve our employment law and may well result in increased costs and less efficiency.

That is not to say that of all regulation is a backward step. There are some essential environmental and food safety requirements that are needed to ensure sustainability and the production of best quality produce. The key issue is how this is achieved. Many growers are facing the prospect of an endless stream of inspectors and auditors coming up their drive, every day of the week, taking valuable time away from their prime job of growing food. They are facing the prospect of conflicting requirements that by default, becomes their job to fix. This leaves little time to grow healthy produce. It is truly the age of the bureaucrat.

One option Horticulture New Zealand is actively pursuing is the "one auditor up the drive". This can be achieved by horticulture's good agriculture practice (GAP) programmes. The one operated by New Zealand growers, but internationally benchmarked, is called NZGAP. Like the other horticulture GAP programmes run in New Zealand, its aims to incorporate many of these additional rules and regulations into the one programme. This includes Food Act, environment and employment law requirements, plus meeting fair trade requirements.

If the collective "we", including government and industry, does not make it time-efficient for growers and farmers to satisfy the increasing number of rules and, if we do not make processes and rules straight forward and enabling, then people will vote with their feet and we will be left with no choice but to import our food. So increased compliance, unless it is done sensibly, will not promote growth, it will drastically inhibit it. There is a real need for Government and industry to work together to ensure that rules are met in the most time-efficient and effective way.

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# Industry leaders in creating the perfect home away from home

Murray & Margaret McPherson, owners and operators of Lifestyle Motorhomes have been in business & a supplier to Ruralco for over 30 years. WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY LIFESTYLE MOTORHOMES



They started Lifestyle Motorhomes in 2001 and are used to customers travelling far and wide to seek their expertise. The business is an absolute one-stop shop for motorhomes, caravans, horse trucks and 5th wheel vehicles with specialised joinery, electrical, engineering, plumbing, gas, fibreglass and upholstery departments. Murray and his staff of twelve offer a variety of services including repairs, refurbishments, upgrades and are the preferred supplier for insurance work. Even the custom builders, manufacturers and importers in New Zealand often send their client repairs to Lifestyle Motorhomes. They are also used by the rental campervan companies. "We're always kept very busy and to be honest I'm always on the lookout for extra staff. At the moment I'm looking for both an electrician and an engineer/coach builder."

Ashburton local Murray is a qualified electrician and his interest in motorhomes began when he developed an electrical system for another motorhome manufacturer. He had his own electrical business before diversifying into motorhomes and the past 18 years has seen a lot of change in the industry. The business started out doing custom built motorhomes – the biggest one to date being a 12-metre home with three slide outs. However, a change in economy prompted Murray to take his expertise into repair, refurbishment and upgrades, "we still do the odd small custom build if people want it, we have all the specialist departments on-site and we enjoy the challenge of bringing the clients ideas to life." The workshop has a variety of around 30 projects on the go at any one time – there's a refurbished vintage caravan that came in as just a plywood exterior with a canvas roof, a number of insurance repairs, a caravan getting a tidy-up after a lack

IMAGE: Murray and his staff of twelve offer a variety of services including repairs, refurbishments, upgrades and are the preferred supplier for insurance work.

of maintenance and an 11-metre motorhome custom built by Lifestyle Motorhomes over 8 years ago that is just in need of some minor repairs. Lack of maintenance according to Murray can be a major issue for many clients, "preventative maintenance is essential, if it's not kept up to a certain level it ends up costing the customer far more."

It was the issue of maintenance and New Zealand's high UV rays that led to Lifestyle Motorhomes creating their exclusive Titan Roof Protection Membrane. Developed with an industrial chemist, this roof protection system is a unique point of difference for the business, "we used so many products over the years but roofs always started to break down regardless, with the outside elements and everything expanding and contracting at different rates" Murray explains. "Our Titan system is applied over three coats and insulates, stops rust, prevents leaks and water proofs. It comes with a 10-year guarantee to offer our customers absolute peace of mind and can be applied on new or older vehicles and is even environmentally friendly. It's an amazing product." Another area where Lifestyle Motorhomes is an industry leader is the issue of compliance and following regulations around power, gas

and sanitation systems. The business does compliance for gas, electricity and self-containment and Murray is proud of the fact that many of the vehicles he designed years ago still comply with today's standards. "Back in the early 2000s not many manufacturers were following the guidelines but we started out that way and it's something we always stuck to. It's probably one of the reasons we managed to stay afloat in difficult times as well as our passion for looking after both our customers and our staff."

Murray and the team enjoy the challenge of keeping pace with new developments in the industry and today even the smallest caravans are kitted out in the latest solar, gas and electrical systems. "People definitely want their home comforts, indoor and outdoor living areas, and with new technology we do a lot of automatic satellite dishes, wireless reversing cameras and safety sensors. Self-containment has improved too with battery innovations and of course everyone wants a hot shower and a flushing toilet." They also offer storage to clients at their on-site storage facility which can be of benefit to clients with limited space at home or clients who want to limit wear and tear to the vehicle. Adapting to industry changes and catering to changing customer needs is something that Lifestyle Motorhomes has done very well over the years. With that in mind Murray is keen to develop the speciality trailers side of the business—focusing on coffee or sushi carts and exhibition and show trailers, hence requiring another coach builder.

It's very much a family affair at Lifestyle Motorhomes with Murray's wife Margaret looking after accounts while daughter Brydie is Office Manager. Son Rhys also plays a part in the business as a qualified auto-electrician. The showroom is a big part of the operation, stocking parts from all major makes and models plus a huge range of items for your home on wheels and outdoor living, "we've got everything from pop up washing baskets & buckets to mini satellite dishes, rechargeable torches and LED lighting, unbreakable dinner sets and glass ware. Come in and purchase your Christmas gifts with a difference from us. Our summer sale starts soon so keep an eye out on some wonderful specials" says Murray.



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# Spark takes the Internet of Things to heartland New Zealand

**In July 2017 Spark announced that it had commenced the development of a nationwide low power Internet of Things (‘IoT’) network.**

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY SPARK

Fast forward 16 months and the traditional telco turned digital services provider has successfully deployed IoT networks that now cover more than 68% of the New Zealand

population including coverage in some rural isolated areas of New Zealand.

Once a buzzword—IoT—is now becoming a staple tech solution on the farm. The capability for IoT networks to transfer small pockets of data with broad coverage at an affordable price point is a true benefit for farmers and rural communities.

Farmers can now have detailed information about pasture, animals, soil moisture, water levels, machinery and systems to make smarter decisions with pinpoint precision.

Spark started by testing the technology with partners from a range of industries, from agriculture through to marine, and is seeing strong demand for use cases as a result.

## Partnering with Levno and rural New Zealand

In March 2018 Spark’s low power IoT network launched in a partnership set to benefit the rural sector. The network was first launched in New Zealand’s top 20 urban centres, but has also been extended to customers in Manawatu, Canterbury and Waikato.



Levno—a fuel monitoring specialist started using the network from April. Their system consists of a battery-powered sensor attached to the fuel tank, which immediately reports any change in volume. This information gets sent in real-time, via the cloud, to the customer's device. When levels get low, the fuel distributor is notified that a delivery is needed—a true showcase of how IoT can help improve farming productivity.

Spark's Digital Services Lead, Michael Stribling says that last year, when Spark announced plans to build two IoT networks in New Zealand to enable the broadest range of IoT uses possible, the huge potential of these for businesses soon became evident.

"We know that for many farmers, this is the technology they need to take their productivity to the next level—whether it's by keeping better track of their resources, moving off cellular technology to lower their

infrastructure costs, or testing the new IoT product they've been developing."

With sensors connected to a low-power network, Spark also expects batteries to last twice as long—up to ten years. The new network also has the flexibility to reach a wider area, enabling the company to extend its service into areas it is not currently able to reach using cellular technology.

## IoT helps farmers manage resources

As the underlying infrastructure needed to enable IoT in New Zealand is established, farmers are seeing a greater range of connected technologies become available to them.

Farmer James Griffin was excited to be one of the first customers to deploy IoT technology on his farm.

Griffin manages the 200-hectare Griffin Family farm in Rangitikei. He has two diesel tanks and two petrol tanks which service three tractors, a truck and ten motorbikes. With some fuel tanks as far as 3.5km from the farm house, Griffin has experienced the difficulty of keeping tabs on the valuable resource. As soon as Levno brought out its monitoring service, he got on board.

The system provides him with three main benefits: stopping fuel theft, managing fuel allocation and stock reconciliation.

Griffin says IoT systems allowed him to stop fuel theft—something common on large farms. It gave him visibility of when fuel was disappearing unaccounted for. It also meant that when fuel was removed during the night, he could know straight away and investigate.

It also saves him time: "I don't have to proactively tell anyone that I need more fuel. We were constantly running out of fuel a few years ago. Now we can adapt to and monitor seasonal use better, and when we do need more, the system sends a message to Allied Petroleum and they come by with a delivery."

With fuel being monitored so closely, farmers like Griffin have a view on which vehicles are needing fuel more often and which are running the most economically. The ability to reconcile stocks also helps with fuel excise duty claims. For many farmers, this has meant huge savings.

## On Farm IoT use cases become more prevalent

Bringing low power, wide area network coverage (LoRaWAN™) connectivity to life for farmers and agribusinesses means those wanting to harness the power of IoT can do so. In farming it's critical to manage resources efficiently. Being able to know in real-time whether a water tank is leaking, or whether a gate's been left open, will save farmers time, money and energy.

For tech savvy Waikato farmer and co-founder of IoT company Knode, Marcus Graham, the new Spark IoT Low Power Network coverage is

an exciting development to help better manage operations on his 145-hectare dairy farm.

"Connecting Knode through Spark's IoT Low Power Network provides another connectivity option and allows me to investigate options for controlling assets on the farm right from my phone."

"Using Spark's IoT Low Power Network to connect to the Knode platform I'm able to monitor water flow, measure tank levels and check for water leaks. The new network will enable the control of things like water valves and pumps right from my pocket. Nine times out of ten I'll get a water leak as I sit down for dinner. Being able to put the pump on snooze until morning will be a game changer." Beyond developing their IoT networks Spark has also launched its' first 'plug and go' solution. Aply called Coverage-in-a-Box the straightforward solution provides customers with a network extension of Spark's IoT Low Power network in just a few steps allowing customers to track more assets and keep tabs on vital data at a low cost making it more affordable for businesses to get underway with IoT.

The product will enable farmers utilising Spark's IoT network to extend coverage indoors by setting up the solution in the milking sheds, storage garages and more to project localised coverage where there was otherwise none. This is a cost friendly solution that farmers can use to track more assets or measure milk, water or oil levels in tanks.

## Spark launches new digital-assessment tool to boost agri-sector

Spark, together with partner Digital Journey, has also launched the Spark Agri Assessment, a tool specifically for the agri-sector. The tool is a response to huge growth in Agribusinesses innovation.

Spark says the agribusiness sector could see some of the fastest growth in IoT technology, with over 50% of the company's IoT partners focused on solutions for this industry.

After answering a series of questions covering mobile technology through to sensors on the farm, participants are delivered a personalised digital action plan that lays out the areas they could consider working on.

Farmers and agribusinesses have been some of the first to adopt smart technologies to revolutionise the way they work, some even founding IoT businesses to solve pain points they face in their day-to-day working lives.

The innovation seen in the agri-sector is extraordinary, farmers have always used kiwi ingenuity to work smarter and now they're taking that number 8 wire mentality to the next level with technology.

Anyone wanting to complete the Spark Agri Assessment tool can check it out at [sparkagri.digitaljourney.nz](http://sparkagri.digitaljourney.nz) or can visit [sparkdigital.co.nz/iot](http://sparkdigital.co.nz/iot).



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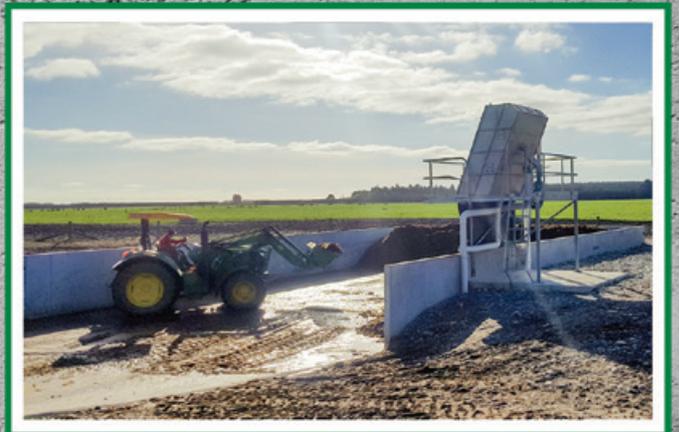
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# CPW brings benefits for farmers and the environment

It's been an interesting start to the irrigation season. We've had some good rains which set farmers up well for what could be a challenging summer and autumn, with El Nino conditions expected to affect east coast regions. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY IRRIGATION NZ



In October, Central Plains Water started operating. Looking back on the history of the scheme, it's been nearly thirty years in the making with Christchurch City Council and Selwyn District Council first starting investing irrigation development in the early 1990s.

To get to where we are now farmers, and the project and construction team who progressed the scheme development have shown huge perseverance. CPW is one of New Zealand's largest private infrastructure projects and it was constructed at a time when there was major pressure on labour and specialist skills like engineering in Canterbury. Given this, it's amazing that it was completed within budget and on time.

The scheme is already benefitting the community as stage 1 alone has allowed 80 million cubic metres of groundwater to remain in aquifers as farmers switch from using groundwater to alpine water.

Stage 2 of the project will allow even more water to remain in aquifers. This will allow groundwater fed streams to have improved flows over time. The local water zone

committee is also planning to use water from CPW to recharge the Selwyn River.

Meanwhile, on the farm, farmers connected to the scheme have certainty that they will have access to water. The scheme can take run of river water when no water restrictions are in place and it can also store water in Lake Coleridge for farmers to use at a later date. Better water reliability offers many opportunities to improve production—for example by growing two crops per year, or by moving into higher value crop production. With dry conditions very likely to make an appearance this summer along with the El Nino, now is a good time to think about how you will manage your irrigation over the next few months.

Developing an irrigation strategy for scheduling your irrigation will help you get the best use of water. Scheduling involves planning your water application across the season and also for individual irrigation events. To schedule your irrigation, you'll need to know your soils water holding capacity, the full-point (the point beyond which any water

IMAGE: Central Plains Water's pipe network under construction

applied is wasted and drains away) and the point at which plant growth starts to drop-off (the stress-point). Soil water infiltration rates are also important as these determine the maximum rate at which water can be applied. IrrigationNZ has developed an online training system on irrigation scheduling which covers how you can use irrigation scheduling to manage within your water budget. The two benefits of scheduling are that it allows you to plan how to maximise your production within the limited water budget you have available and also saves you money by avoiding any unnecessary irrigation which reduces electricity and often water user charges. Good water planning will also ensure you're not caught out in the Autumn with no more water available. The online system is free for IrrigationNZ members to use. If you're interested in finding out more about the system, please give us a ring on 03 341 2225 or visit [www.irrigationnz.co.nz](http://www.irrigationnz.co.nz)

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# Pork prospects good despite challenges



**New-Zealand pork producers could be expected to feel like a sector under siege in recent years.** WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGE BY AMY PIPER

With a deluge of imported product pouring through New Zealand retail trade, the constant threat of devastating disease outbreaks hovering in the background, and a tough campaign by animal rights activists, it would be easy to wonder how the country's pig farmers manage to get out of bed every morning.

But industry body New Zealand Pork has just appointed Southland farmer Eric Roy to the role of Chairman, and he remains optimistic about the industry's future and how New Zealand producers are setting the standards for product quality, animal welfare and environmental management.

When Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (now MPI) approved the importation of raw pork products into New Zealand in 2011, producers braced themselves for a surge of product that would threaten to undercut local producers' lowest possible prices, and even raise the risk of disease.

"Where we are at now, price for pork and what we compete on against imported pork has proven to be an issue. It is tough for our guys to compete with pork products that are capable of being retailed at \$3 a kg, there simply is nothing in it for local producers," says Roy.

He said the added sting comes with the conditions many of those overseas pigs have been raised in.

"We have no say over the conditions that pork is raised in, yet our operators face some very definitive, demanding regulations about how we operate here."

It is an imbalance that many producers had raised when the decision to allow raw pork imports here was first mooted almost 10 years ago, and it has proven to have come true.

After some high-profile publicity over poor piggery practices, the industry herein New Zealand has worked hard to overhaul and upgrade its standards and has set the bar higher than even standard welfare expectations with its PigCare programme.

Only implemented last year, the programme is still undergoing some bedding in, but it has been established as the only whole of industry certification process, independently verified and audited.

Taking the latest in understanding on pig behaviour and science, combined with input from MPI, vets, farmers and NZ Pork, the programme integrates New Zealand's already high animal welfare standards with a focus on farmer care, knowledge and experience when it comes to providing for their animals' health and wellbeing.

"Even though there is a large part of the market looking at the price of pork, there is also a significant part looking at traceability and welfare, and PigCare addresses this."

While it may not put a dent in the 60% of pork product imported to New Zealand, it is likely to help boost returns and margins to producers here.

"And really that is what we are trying to achieve, we want the industry here to be viable and sustainable."

"What PigCare means is we can provide evidence we have adhered to certain practices like withholding periods on drugs, for example – a lot of what we can say about PigCare raised pork, you cannot guarantee on the imported product."

One of the risks coming with imported product is disease, and while New Zealand maintains import standards as strict as those required for any exported product, disease risk always plays in the minds of producers.

At present China is being hit hard by African Swine Fever (ASF), as are parts of Europe where the first case of it was confirmed in Belgium in early September.

"We only import 23 tonnes of pork a year from China, but the concern for us is any pork coming in over the border as family gifts. Fortunately Minister Damien O'Connor has been very sympathetic to our concerns and has worked to increase vigilance over Asian passengers arriving here through customs."

ASF is highly contagious and a pig population can often have 30-50% losses.

Usually the only means to effectively eradicate it is through wholesale culling of a herd. The disease has moved quickly through China since first being recorded in early August.

In what is very much a breaking story, by mid-October the largest single farm hit with ASF in China had 20,000 pigs, as the threat

to the country's US\$1 trillion pig industry ratchets up.

Experts believe that should Chinese authorities call for wholesale culling, the impact on global protein markets will be significant given China's status as the world's largest pig meat consumer.

"We are continuing to work with the ministry of lifting our scrutiny of any pork products coming into New Zealand."

He said it was a condition of trade that New Zealand could not ban imported product, but standards and assessment of product will play a big role in keeping the disease out.

Meantime at home, Roy is working to push the case for keeping farrowing facilities in commercial pig operations, despite strong opposition from animal welfare groups, including SAFE.

The case comes before a primary producers select committee soon and Roy is concerned opponents have been selective in their use of data and information about the facilities.

"If you look to Denmark, one of the world's largest pig producers, they have spent 10 years exploring options, that is with the might and funding of the Common Agricultural Policy behind them. They have only managed to get 2.3% of pigs farrowing outside of containment – if there was a clear winning alternative to farrowing crates, they would have found it."

He accepts some New Zealand pig farmers are opting for free range type operations, and maintains NZ Pork does not endorse any one option over another.

"We just want to see what is backed by the best science to assist the best means of production." Pig mortality and health-safety risks to staff and accurate assessment of sow productivity are the three big barriers to farrowing alternatives.

"There is a very variable range of mortality rates, but overall about 4% more pigs will die under a less contained system. Over a large-scale piggery operation, that is significant."

But for local pig producers keen to push their high-quality New Zealand pork, Country of Origin Label has been a definitive and recent win.

That has been strengthened further in recent weeks, with the Primary Production Select Committee reinstating cured meats into the bill. Roy expects this to be passed by the end of the year, and the industry is anticipating it will hold some strong marketing cards for it.

Interestingly, for an industry locked into the domestic market, there are some producers starting to look at options for leveraging off New Zealand's excellent biosecurity standards and high quality product, to look at exporting.

It is a similar move to what is also being experienced in the poultry sector, where Tegal in particular has pushed into Japan,

Hong Kong and United Arab Emirates in recent years—like the pork industry, the low disease level and freedom from growth hormones and antibiotic use holds strong appeal to many overseas consumers.

"We would struggle to compete on a commodity basis, but the appeal for high quality, even organic pork products is there."

The industry also continues to play an integral role in key regions including Manawatu, Mid Canterbury and Waikato, supporting these regions' arable and maize sectors with grain demand.

"Overall, 60% of the sector sits in the middle of the South Island and it plays a big part in keeping demand there for grain output."

While pork consumption is not rocketing away on a per capita basis in New Zealand, it is holding its own as a protein option, and Roy remains optimistic about the sector's ability to differentiate itself from the continuing overseas competition and believes the skill of the sector's farmers gives it a level of robustness and durability.

With the NZ Pork board including two new Directors from the Canterbury region, Helen Andrews from South Canterbury and Southern Pork Managing Director Jason Palmer from Dunsandel, Roy is confident the industry is represented by new ideas, fresh thinking and a dynamic approach to its future.

## Pork Facts:

**108** Commercial pig farms in Sector

**60%** Production bred indoors

**2%** Free range production

**95%** Sector covered by PigCare certification

**23kg /head** Annual per capita consumption of pork in NZ (up 3kg in 5 years)

**44,780t** Meat produced each year

SOURCE: NZ Pork Industry Board, Annual Report 2017.

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# Thiamine deficiency in ruminants

**The changing seasons in New Zealand often bring a new set of animal health challenges and diseases.** WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY IAN HODGE BVSC., MANZCVS. GM TECH SERVICES. VETERINARY ENTERPRISES GROUP

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

Vitamin B1, also known as thiamine, is produced by microorganisms in the rumen. Thiamine has an important function in producing energy in nerve tissue. This energy is used to keep excessive salt and water out of nerve cells. In thiamine deficiency salt leaks back into the cells. With high concentrations of salt in the cells water naturally follows, and soon the affected cells start to swell and become dysfunctional.

Thiamine is a water soluble vitamin and cannot be stored in large quantities in ruminants. They rely on the bugs in their rumens to make the thiamine, and normally this process carries on without a hitch. Occasionally, other bugs in the rumen degrade thiamine or make it much less available for the animal to use effectively and in these situations deficiencies can occur.

Dietary changes can predispose to thiamine deficiency by causing an imbalance in

bacterial populations in the rumen. High starch intakes commonly seen in summer with lush grass and meal feeding can lead to significant rumen imbalance. Some plants also produce substances which destroy thiamine. High sulphur levels have been thought to play a role in thiamine deficiency, and this is sometimes seen when water sulphate levels are too high.

Animals affected by thiamine deficiency show nervous signs which are related to the changes in the salt content of the nerve cells in the brain. Water flows into the cells and they swell. In fact the entire brain swells and presses against the inside of the skull. It is this process that is largely responsible for the changes in behaviour we see in affected animals.

In the early stages of the disease, animals with thiamine deficiency will separate themselves and may appear unsteady or blind. They may walk aimlessly and bump into gates etc. If left untreated the disease quickly progresses and these animals become aggressive, blind, have muscle tremors and soon are unable to stand.

Once down they become more and more rigid, throw their heads back and have fatal seizures if no treatments are given.

The treatment for thiamine deficiency involves high doses of thiamine hydrochloride possibly combined with anti-inflammatory drugs, and drugs that promote loss of water from the brain. A quick diagnosis is required for the treatment to be successful, and a careful veterinary examination will soon rule out other possibilities like lead poisoning, magnesium deficiency, Listeriosis and meningitis.

In summer, thiamine deficiency is common in weaned calves. These young ruminants are susceptible to sudden dietary changes and often succumb. Some treatments for Coccidiosis can precipitate an episode of thiamine deficiency.

Calves should be given plenty of fibrous feed to complement their grass, and any changes to the diet should be made slowly. Interestingly, adult cows can also get thiamine deficiency but it is less common than in calves.



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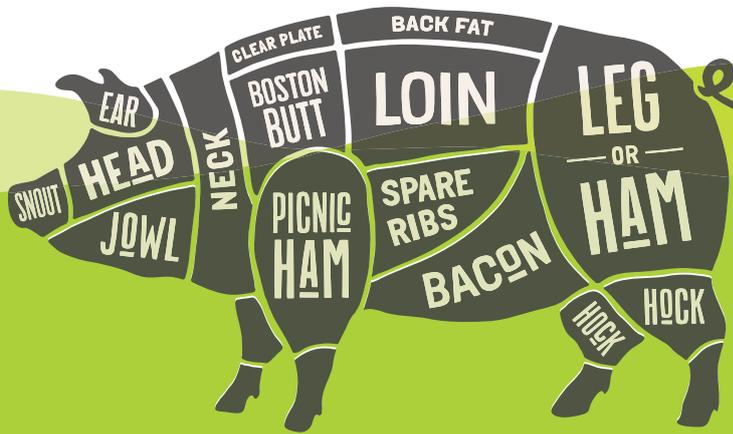


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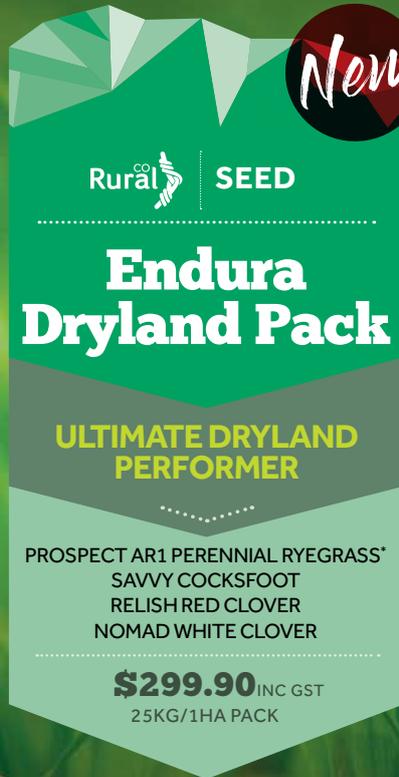
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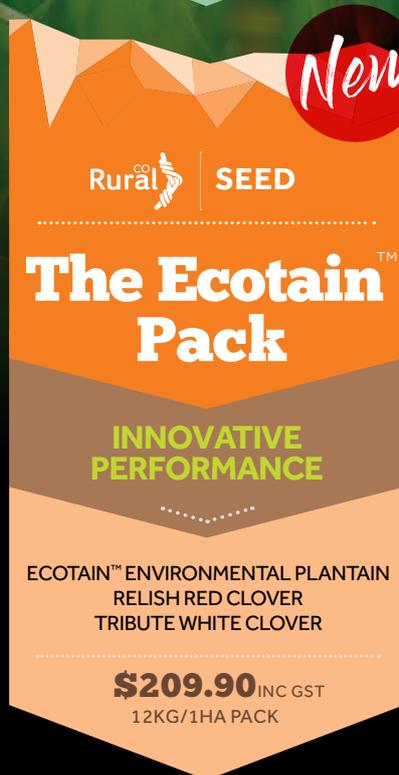
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With Cydectin continuing to kill the parasite larvae that are ingested every day, lambs are able to turn protein and energy into muscle and weight, thus enabling them to meet faster slaughter weights or dates. Most drenches only kill parasites present on the day of treatment; the next day, they're reinfected with ingested larvae, and the lamb's immune system has to divert protein to kill off those parasites, rather than using it for growth.

A New Zealand trial using Cydectin Oral looked at what effect parasites have on growth rates<sup>1</sup>. Lambs were treated either with Cydectin Oral or a short-acting drench

then, a month later, they received the other drench. When each group of lambs received Cydectin treatment, they grew faster than the short acting treatment group. On average this was 60 or 87 grams a day faster, because of the longer protection Cydectin provided. With these additional growth rates, lambs can finish faster or reach slaughter or tugging weights more quickly, making farms more productive.

Cydectin Oral is a highly effective broad spectrum drench with a wide safety margin for lambs. It has the lowest rates of resistance of any of the older single active drenches<sup>2</sup>. It contains moxidectin, which is the most potent active in its class, meaning it's able to kill worms that are resistant to less potent actives such as ivermectin and abamectin.

Cydectin Oral is a long-acting single active product so, in order to reduce the chance of drench resistance, it should be used in a targeted way - not as an everyday drench.

The best times to use it are when there is a high worm challenge (such as on paddocks where there was a heavy crop of twin born lambs), in the Autumn when larval numbers tend to peak (especially after a late summer rain), or for a short time to achieve a goal, such as getting lambs growing faster so they can leave the farm sooner!

A period of Cydectin Oral use should be followed by an effective short-acting combination treatment (an 'Exit' drench) a month later, which can also help delay resistance.

Despite its long activity period against infectious worms, Cydectin Oral has a conveniently short meat withholding period of only 10 days, which allows for frequent drafting with no hold ups. And if you have a dairy sheep farm, Cydectin Oral is ideal as its milk withholding is only 84 hours. Cydectin Oral is available in 15L packs with or without selenium (Cydectin S) and, if tapeworms are a problem, Cydectin Plus Tape is available to control them.

If you want to get more lambs off the farm faster and at heavier weights, consider using Cydectin Oral this season.

Talk to your local Ruralco representative for more information.

References:

<sup>1</sup> Murphy, A. A comparison of production responses in lambs drenched with moxidectin or ivermectin. NZJ. Ag Res. 1994

<sup>2</sup> McKenna P, Update on anthelmintic resistance, Vetscript June 2018

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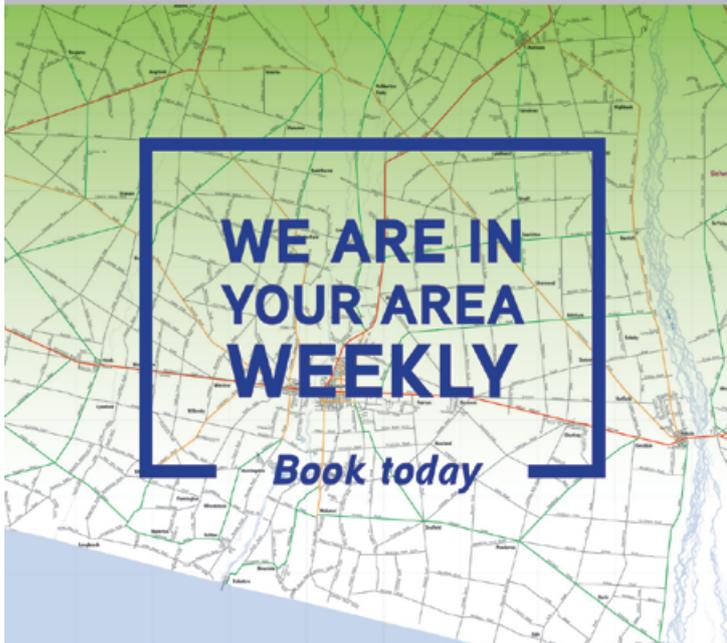


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# The pick of the pigs and the best of the boars



**For brothers James and Henry Pearse, Canterbury Cup and Show week is most definitely Pig Week.**

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES BY HELE POWER

As the founding members of the Boar Breeders Association (BBA) they have a very busy schedule for the week, it's also a full-on time for Augustus and Hammstein, their precious boars who are entered in the show and competing for the coveted Rammstein Memorial Trophy given to the boar judged best commercial boar across all the weight classes.

The brothers, and friend Sam Brown, are known as the Pleasant Point Mafia and are just one of a host of syndicates entered at the Canterbury A&P Show, united in their goal of winning best in show for their prized pigs.

Pig showing has seen a big revival at the Show in recent years and while he is very modest about it, self-confessed pig fan

James is at least partly responsible for starting off this revolution. A born and bred Pleasant Point local, James's family are deer farmers with no history of pig showing. After graduating from Lincoln with a degree in Environmental Management he spent some time in Canada working with a hunting adventure company. James's boss was a fellow pig enthusiast and spent a lot of time talking about the pigs he had entered in local county fairs in the USA and James's interest was sparked and when he returned back to farming in NZ he decided to give it a go.

In 2014 James and Henry entered their very first pig—Rammstein—in the Canterbury A&P Show. They purchased him off the pig competition judge, "we figured that was a pretty good place to start looking for a good pig" James explains. Rammstein took away top honours that year but James was surprised that there was only one other pig entry at the show, and it had been like that for a few years. Apparently commercial pig farmers don't often show pigs at events due to a high risk of exposure to disease and infections to their animals, hence the low turnout of pigs. "It's different for people like us in the syndicates as we just have one or two pigs so there's no risk to us."

In 2015 James competed with one of Rammstein's offspring (Frankenstein), while a friend of James's competed with Frankenstein's brother. Everyone enjoyed the friendly rivalry and the Boar Breeders Association was conceived. Word of mouth spread and James's friends and associates organised themselves into syndicates, found themselves a quality pig with the aim of entering the show and maybe winning a prize or two. "All of our friends tend to go to the show anyway and this is a great way to hang out together and have a bit of banter." There's no official membership and everything is done via their Facebook page, as James modestly puts it "we just like talking pigs and the BBA helps promote the showing side of it and helps people out on the path to showing their pigs." Their Facebook page puts a more down to earth spin on it "a bunch of great people who love talking hogs and drinking rum!"

The BBA has certainly put pigs back on the map at the show, showing numbers have surged in the last two years, last year there were 44 entries and this year there are 53

ABOVE: James Pearse, Sam Brown and Henry Pearse



potential pig powerhouses. There are even syndicates travelling down from the north island to compete with their pigs. Last year pigs were given their own showing arena for the first time and 2018 brings the first celebrity results announcer; The Topp Twins were on hand to give out the honours to the prize-winning pigs and owners. As a nod to the success of pig showing and its popularity, this year the Show also has a bar named in honour of the BBA—The Boar Boar Bar. In addition, the Show is organising a lunch for all the pig entrants, be they BBA members or traditional pig breeders. “We always try to be respectful of the established breeders who may not be BBA members and this lunch is a great opportunity to just talk pigs.”

Another standout event in the BBA calendar has also returned this year, the BBA Ball. This was the third year of the Ball and again it has modest roots, starting out as just a gathering for James and his friends. However just like the BBA concept, it has taken on a life of its own and this year over 300 people attended and next year they may well need a bigger venue. James is surprised himself at the

popularity of the BBA but he believes people enjoy the competition and the friendly banter around showing. For spectators it is also pretty amusing with lots of witty pig names; Hugh Grunt, Donald Rump, Justin Beboar and Rocky Boarboa are all on show this year. The syndicates also enjoy putting some fun into showing off their pigs—dressing up in costumes or snappy suits with quirky names like The Streaky Stokers or The Pork Pullers. It’s definitely a new twist on an aspect of A&P showing that is normally more traditional and conservative.

It’s not all fun and games for the pigs or the syndicates however, and there is a bit of work in getting the pig to the show and winning top prize. The Pleasant Point Mafia have been working hard to get both Augustus and Hammstein in top condition for the competition.

Augustus weighs in at an impressive 208 kilos and is a son of Rammstein, a Hampshire/Large White cross and Hammstein is a pure Large White. Diet is obviously key to the optimum size and the pigs also have to have a social disposition

ABOVE LEFT: Toby Redfern, Sandy Head, Luke Graham, Tom Smith, Angus Sloss & George Newton

ABOVE MIDDLE: Luc Rodwell, George Mannering & Ben Rodwell

ABOVE RIGHT: Sam Brons, Tim Waghorn, Digby Heard and Duke Loe

BELOW: Sam Bell, Becs Ferguson, Tim Sowman, Alfie Broughton, Dan Frampton—Winners of the Champion Boar

to be able to show. Last year due to popular demand a commercial class was started with the aim of eliminating any breed preference in judging. This class is purely focused on finding the best eating pig based on size and conformation and the meat in all the right places.

Methven based butchery and Ruralco Card Supplier Drycreekmeats are sponsoring the class this year, offering \$500 to the winning boar, so the stakes are definitely high and there are 37 boars competing to take the prize money as well as the Rammstein Memorial Trophy. Rammstein himself is actually still alive and a very successful breeding boar in Blenheim, he now weighs in at a whopping 350 kgs. This year he is returning back to James’s farm to potentially sire the next prize-winning pig.

In terms of future plans, it can be very different outcomes for the owners versus the pigs. According to James, roughly half of this year’s competitors may well end up on the BBQ during the festive season before the search starts again next year for the next competitor.

Due to the BBA success at Canterbury A&P Show, other A&P Shows are now beginning to introduce pig classes which is obviously a testament to the great work of the BBA and the syndicates. “Sure, I might have been the one to start it but it’s all the great people who have come after me and jumped onboard is what has kept the momentum going, we’ve got a good bunch of members and I hope it continues” says James.



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# Ruralco meets mandate as ideal farmer co-operative

Ruralco's ability to hold its own in the tough rural trading environment is thanks as much to the co-operative's ability to be nimble in a rapidly moving market, a culture that motivates staff to rally together alongside its farming members, and implementing the valued principles that sit behind the ethos of every successful co-operative.

DIRECTOR, JESSIE CHAN-DORMAN



The three key components for any co-operative are having an organisation that is owned by its shareholders, controlled by them and returns the benefits to them.

Ruralco's long stated goal to reduce the input costs to its farmer shareholders is a simple one, and an easy reference for management, board and shareholders to refer to when it comes to almost every aspect of the business's decision making process. Added to this is the goal of being the partner of choice for rural New Zealand.

There are challenges for any co-operative when it starts to make decisions that could lead to it veering away from those simple

co-operative principals, possibly with ramifications that are not fully appreciated until many years later. Co-operatives do evolve over time, but we need to ensure that any evolution is deliberate and well thought-out, that it serves the purpose of the members, and that it does not happen by stealth.

Whether the decisions are based on a need for greater scale, more members, market share or even market dominance, the challenge remains to ensure that the activities of the co-operative are meeting the purpose of the members and members are receiving the benefits.

Similarly, just getting bigger can be the undoing of a co-operative, with the potential

for losing those values of community and equality that they are so often founded on. Scale can make it challenging for staff, shareholders and board members to know and understand each other as well as they may like. Ruralco has managed to maintain its key goal, relevancy and collegiality in an intensely competitive trading market by taking a nimble and "out of the box" approach to scaling up from its traditional Canterbury founding base.

The move to build on founding company ATS's supplier card experience means the Ruralco Card has enabled the co-operative to expand well beyond Canterbury, continuing to meet our goal of offering value to shareholders but now throughout the country, without incurring the major extra overheads of building new bricks and mortar stores.

But most co-operatives are also driven by a broader holistic goal of delivering social benefits within the community they are part of, and it is an expectation Ruralco is fulfilling well.

As a co-operative Ruralco has invested significant amounts back into the rural community.

Maintaining Ruralco's co-operative values, whilst keeping it a sustainable, viable business comes as much down to its governance depth, as its management skills.

Under Group Chief Executive Rob Sharkie, the co-operative's management has engendered a strong sense of team work and unity that reflects well in the day to day work environment.

There is a sense of having a real passion about what they do, and the community within which they do it.

At a governance level the board now contains an admirable level of diversity.

Not only is it gender balanced, but members span the age range and bring with them a diversity of business experience – with some having a perspective developed outside farming they have been able to help inject and maintain that nimbleness and forward thinking that has helped Ruralco punch well above its weight.

Opting to make oneself available to be a director of any enterprise is a significant personal undertaking, not only in terms of time and commitment required, but it is also a reflection of one's personal values and priorities.

Ruralco reflects this well through its staff, directors and shareholders who chose to be part of it.

# A capital trip for Meridian and Ruralco clients

Helping cardholders maximise farm profits by getting the best deals possible has been helped by Ruralco developing an extensive and strong network of supply companies throughout the country, extending across all aspects of farm business.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY MERIDIAN ENERGY



Whether it is seeds in the ground, fuel to power the tractor or energy to power the farm dairy shed or irrigator, Ruralco's relationships with respected suppliers gives cardholders the peace of mind they are getting a quality service or product at the best possible price.

But deals and services are inevitably about people and relationships, and Ruralco staff will often live and work in the areas they service, helping build those relationships on a personal level as much as a business level.

The values of community, success and integrity extend to Ruralco suppliers that

share the same goals including Meridian, Ruralco's energy partner for electricity supply to cardholders.

The Meridian-Ruralco partnership has proven to be a win:win opportunity for the energy supplier and co-operative to fulfil their joint goals to provide the best possible service and price to their valued rural customers and shareholders, ensuring farm operations benefit, along with the communities they are both so prominent within.

Ruralco has benefitted by having a relationship with one of the country's largest, most sustainable energy providers,

ABOVE: The lucky electricity users who joined Meridian/Ruralco for the trip to the capital  
TOP: Checking out the turbine blades at Meridian's West Wind Farm

while Meridian has enjoyed gaining access to some of the country's largest farming electricity users seeking the best deals possible for major farm businesses often relying upon electricity for irrigation.

To share their appreciation of cardholder's loyalty, Meridian and Ruralco recently hosted a group of long-time loyal farmer customers on a trip to the capital, mixing



ABOVE: Getting blown away at Meridian's West Wind Farm  
 BELOW: Watching the All Blacks loose against South Africa  
 BOTTOM: The Meridian traders desk

up a bit of company information, culture and, of course, an All Blacks test game. Consisting of 10 cardholders, their partners and some Meridian staff, the group headed to Wellington on a mid-morning flight and on arrival headed to Meridian's West Wind Farm. Located at Makara on Wellington's south-west coast the 62 turbine operation can generate up to 144mW of electricity, enough for about 62,000 average homes a year. The funnelling effect of Cook Strait means the site is ideal for wind generation with its strong, consistent wind speeds. The 11 year old wind operation is based around a working sheep farm operation, and also includes three walkways in a recreation area. The tour provided by Meridian's Wind Maintenance and Development Manager, Chris Moore, gave an excellent insight to the engineering within the turbine systems, and the value of a clean renewable energy source.

**“For us it was a great opportunity to say thanks to some loyal clients.”**

That afternoon some of the group opted to head to Te Papa, taking the opportunity to catch the memorable Gallipoli exhibit. Then it was off to the highlight of the trip, the All Blacks/South Africa test game at Wellington Stadium. The close, hard fought game was appreciated by the enthusiastic supporters, revelling in the atmosphere that only Wellington can produce. A much appreciated sleep in the next day gave the group an opportunity to enjoy Wellington's waterfront, then visit Meridian's head office overlooking the harbour, and get an insight into the workings of the electricity market. Meridian Agribusiness Key Account Manager Glenn McWhinnie said the two days proved a memorable time for all the participants. “The feedback we have had from our customers who went was that it was a

chance to just get a break away from the farm for a short time, spend some time seeing a few different aspects of Meridian, and Wellington. For us it was a great opportunity to say thanks to some loyal clients.” Tracey Gordon, Ruralco Energy Account Manager, also welcomed the opportunity to catch up with some valued customers and thank them for their loyalty.

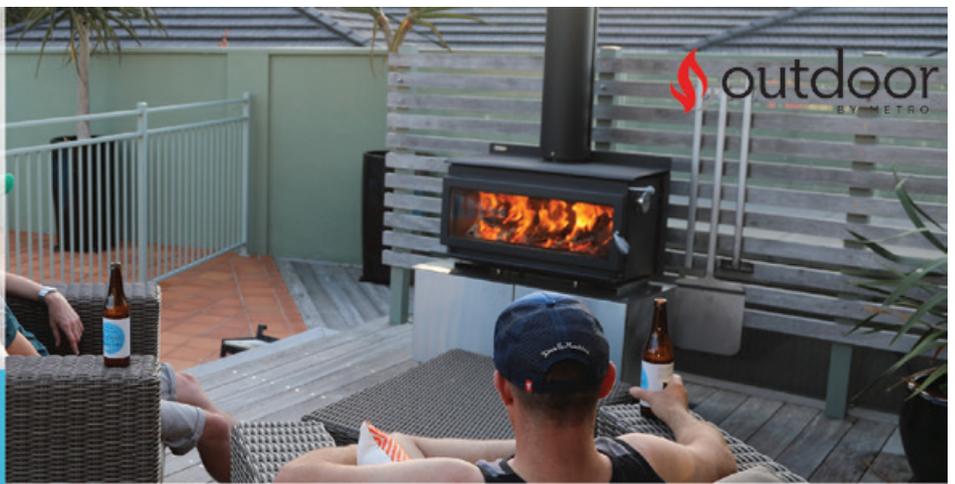
“We focus a lot on building good relationships with our clients and recognising they all have quite varied needs when it comes to electricity, and it's great to bring them together for a social occasion.”



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# Making the most of novel endophyte: do best by your stock

It's been 30 years since Barenbrug Agriseeds became the first private company in the southern hemisphere to start researching and developing novel ryegrass endophytes.

ARTICLE AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BARENBRUG AGRISEEDS



Every year, the team there learns more about the fascinating, complex relationship between ryegrass, and its natural fungus.

"Our aim has always been to get the best out of endophyte in terms of animal health, while maintaining strong control across a range of insect pests," says upper South Island area manager Craig Weir. "This is a balancing act, which we believe we have successfully achieved."

If you look at how different endophytes stack up in each of these categories, it becomes clear that NEA endophytes from Barenbrug Agriseeds allow farmers to do the best by their livestock at the same time as protecting their pastures.

AR1 endophyte, for example, has very good animal performance and health. But it is weak against black beetle and root aphid.

AR37 endophyte has good to very good control of key pests. However, the chemicals it produces are not always animal friendly. It is not suitable for deer or horses, and can cause severe staggers in sheep and lambs.

"NEA endophytes bridge the gap," Craig says. "Because they pose very little risk of ryegrass staggers in sheep, beef cattle and dairy cows, they have an outstanding animal safety record.

This comes with good control of key pests to support pasture persistence. "We believe they provide the best combination of animal health and insect control that you can buy."

NEA is a unique group of endophytes which Barenbrug Agriseeds first discovered in 1991. The research behind this breakthrough began in 1987, however, and continues today.

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

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

NEA comes in Shogun hybrid ryegrass and Agriseeds' newest endophyte NEA4 is available in tetraploid perennial Viscout.

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

That includes animal safety grazing trials, regional persistence trials, insect bioassays and alkaloid analysis. "These trials are on-going as we develop new ryegrass/endophyte combinations for the future."

Since 2006, Barenbrug Agriseeds has partnered on endophyte discovery with AgriBio, a world-leading agricultural bioscience R&D operation in Australia.

This work has led to molecular identification of more than 400 potential new endophytes, the best of which enter the company's NZ pasture development programme.

Endophytes are essential for pasture persistence on NZ farms. They are fungi that have evolved to live in harmony with ryegrass, producing natural compounds which protect their host plants from pests like Argentine stem weevil and black beetle.

To find out more about NEA endophytes, contact Ruralco today.

ABOVE: Animal trials ensure NEA endophytes don't affect stock performance or health. Small paddocks are used, each with lambs grazing a specific ryegrass cultivar x endophyte combination  
BELOW: Barenbrug Agriseeds science manager Colin Eady overseeing endophyte alkaloid analysis at AgriBio





IMAGE: Mark Saunders with his wife Pennie

# Director steps down with pride

**This year's annual general meeting was the last for Mark Saunders as he stepped down from his directorship role after six years on the co-operative board. Mark's term on the board has spanned a period encompassing some of the most significant changes Ruralco has experienced in its 55 year existence, and includes changes that will set it up well for the future.**

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

This includes the most obvious, the brand change from ATS to Ruralco. It was a change that was more than a simple revision, and captures the co-operative's vision to offer its competitive and expert services to a farmer market beyond its founding Ashburton base.

Mark's decision to step up to a directorship role six years ago came in an environment where rural governance was still developing, and he saw the opportunity to play a role helping a co-operative he was already a shareholder in set its path into the future.

"At that time there was an opportunity for younger directors to get on board, and that said a lot about the co-operative's willingness to work towards a diverse and dynamic board profile."

**"...it's not just an obligation you have to fulfil, it is playing a part in helping grow the business..."**

Today he can point to a board that exemplifies what a diverse directorship mix should be, with a 43% female:male balance, good representation of younger directors and input from two independent directors providing additional experience and depth from beyond the immediate agricultural sector.

"And it has really been about stepping up and taking an opportunity in our community with what is a win:win position—it's not just an obligation you have to fulfil, it is playing a part in helping grow the business, while still keeping those values that make it what it is in the first place."

One of the most significant achievements Mark has overseen in his time on the Ruralco board has been the launch and 100% ownership of the Ruralco card services side of the business.

An innovative approach to growing a small regional co-operative without investing in significant store and branch assets, the card has meant Ruralco has grown its reach well beyond Ashburton, extending into the remainder of the South Island, Lower North Island and Taranaki through its services and supplier network.

**"We have been able to cut our cloth where we need to, while also not holding back on making changes and investment where we think it is necessary for the co-operative's next phase of growth."**

"And over time we will have the opportunity to grow organically beyond that."

The Ruralco Card has enabled the co-operative to link up with suppliers committed to offering farmers exceptional prices on products and farm inputs, while also sharing Ruralco's values of community commitment and participation.

Meantime within Ruralco, during his tenure the board has overseen the appointment of a new Group Chief Executive and two highly capable Chairmen.

"I think what we have also managed to achieve is a good alignment between management and governance, with the two working well with each other, with a good level of respect and commitment from both."

He believes this is reflected in the quality and tenure of the staff at Ruralco, with a good quantity of quality younger staff being recruited and remaining within the co-operative, providing a valuable source of future leaders and managers for the co-operative.

"It is rewarding to look at the skills and talent that are already within the co-operative, and from here we can work on enhancing their leadership skills and capabilities."

The past few years have contained more than their share of volatility in farm

commodity prices, putting pressure on farmer shareholders and ultimately Ruralco's income. However, Mark believes the co-operative's smaller size and level of staff commitment has meant it has been nimble enough to roll with the challenges.

"We have been able to cut our cloth where we need to, while also not holding back on making changes and investment where we think it is necessary for the co-operative's next phase of growth."

This has included a complete revamp of Ruralco's digital platform in recent months—the significant investment has set the co-operative up for a rapidly evolving rural retail market, and enhanced its established card management services.

"It is not only there to help expand our geographic reach, but also for those shareholders in close proximity whose business patterns are changing and who are looking to use online purchasing more than they have before."

Meantime he is pleased the co-operative has managed to maintain the ethos and values that drew its original shareholders to it, namely being able to offer them the best prices possible to ensure their farm businesses are as profitable as possible.

But while maintaining farm profits is important, Mark maintains Ruralco and its staff have set a high standard for supporting and sponsoring its rural community.

In return the farming community has shown its appreciation by becoming loyal shareholders within the co-operative. That is in what is a fiercely competitive rural services sector that puts the co-operative up against some significantly larger, well-funded competition.

"Our sponsorship commitments say much about the sense of pride we have in our rural communities, and both customers and staff are very much part of that too—we punch well above our weight in this respect."

The next couple of years bring plenty of challenges for Mark within his rural interests. This includes work on the MHV water co-operative, helping manage its environmental needs and governance demands and working with other schemes around the region.

His time is also kept busy overseeing his extensive dairying interests that includes a 2,000 cow, twin dairy operation and grazing support business.



# The arable sector and climate change

One of the many things that New-Zealand arable farmers do very, very well, is adapting to change. New crops, new markets, new rules and regulations...been there, done that, got it sorted. For this reason, it's easy for them to respond to concerns about the impacts of climate change with an "it'll be alright on the night" mentality.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ALISON STEWART, CEO FAR

Given their proven ability to adapt, this approach is understandable. Unfortunately, it is also overly optimistic. First, climate change is already here, in the form of increasingly frequent 'extreme weather events'. Second, these events are already having a serious impact on farm businesses, as some arable farmers learned this year with many South Island crops delivering poor yields and quality due to extreme heat during flowering and seed formation, and

North Island ones being hit by Cyclone Gita. So what, if anything, can be done to prepare the arable industry for climate change?

The recently released report from the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change led to a warning that New Zealanders will have to "scale up action in unprecedented ways across all sectors of our economy and everyday life, over the next 10 years".

For the arable industry, this "scaling up" needs to involve the investigation and

implementation of technologies that will help growers:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and thus slow climate change;
2. Farm through climate change.

## Reducing emissions

The New Zealand cropping industry contributes less than one percent of New Zealand's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and of these, the biggest



contributor is nitrogen fertiliser. Total emissions from nitrogen fertiliser manufacture and subsequent field application equates to 60-65% of total emissions for wheat, with similar percentages reported for maize and ryegrass. Other GHG contributors are crop residues, stubble burning, fuel and electricity. These figures clearly indicate that the best way to reduce arable sector GHG emissions, is to reduce nitrogen use.

FAR is involved in a number of research projects aimed at ensuring efficient use of nutrients. These include field trials linking N rates to yield in a range of crops, and monitoring programmes, which, in some cases, suggest that farmers underestimate how much soil N is available to their crop and apply too much N fertiliser.

These, and other, research programmes will identify problem areas and provide solutions around efficient use of nutrients. Developing tools to help growers to reduce N fertiliser applications without reducing productivity and profitability, will in turn reduce the

industry's GHG emissions and the risk of N losses to air and water. Precision agriculture is likely to play a key role in this area and could potentially deliver a 20-30% increase in fertiliser use efficiency. Combined with an increase in minimum/no tillage practices and the timely use of cover/catch crops it is not unrealistic to think that arable growers could reduce their GHG emissions by 30% over the next decade. This would strengthen the arable sector's environmental footprint and make arable crops an attractive option for integration into mixed land use systems.

### Farming through change

Understanding exactly what climate change will look like in different regions of New Zealand is also important, particularly with respect to cultivar selection and new biosecurity threats. For example, it seems likely that Canterbury will need grain and seed varieties that are able to grow and yield in hotter, drier conditions; while North Island maize growers may be looking for varieties suited to a shorter, wetter growing season.

Developing new plant varieties can take decades, so it is good to know that work is already underway to identify cultivars with these important traits. A change of climate is also likely to result in a different mix of weeds, pests and diseases. Existing pests will shift to previously unaffected regions, and new ones may arrive and thrive.

Climate change is happening now, so New Zealand's very capable arable farmers need to be proactive in addressing the key challenges. This will provide both their businesses and the industry as a whole with the best chance of future success.

ABOVE LEFT: Crops planting dates and days to maturity are two factors which need to be considered under climate change

ABOVE RIGHT: Understanding exactly what climate change will look like in different regions of New Zealand is also important

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# Dress well this summer

Nitrogen side-dressings encourage a good, strong canopy on summer crops and improve yields. WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



The amount of light a plant can photosynthesise has a direct effect on yield.

"Most photosynthesis occurs in the leaves, so a healthy, leafy canopy means the plant can capture more light and is more productive," says Ballance Science Extension Officer Aimee Dawson. "A good canopy also cuts back on weeds and evaporation from the bare soil around the plant, so the plant can use all of the water and nutrients around it."

Nitrogen is ideal for boosting leafy growth. For best results, side-dressings need to be individually timed for different crops' high growth periods.

## Brassicas

Apply nitrogen at sowing and side-dressing four to six weeks after sowing, when plants are about gumboot height. For leafy turnips, rape and other brassicas which can be grazed more than once, reapply after the first grazing.

## Fodder beet

Fodder beets need to develop a strong canopy early on, to provide the plant with energy to grow the bulb. Apply a small amount of nitrogen (usually with starter fertiliser) at sowing. At canopy closure, usually around four to six weeks after sowing, use a single application. Recent research has shown no benefit from late applications of nitrogen on fodder beet yield.

## Maize

Apply nitrogen at sowing and once maize reaches knee-height (the six-true leaf stage).

This is often around four to six weeks after sowing.

Targeting nitrogen application to high growth periods, rather than later in the season, prevents the crop's nitrate levels from getting too high, which could result in stock losses or reduced performance.

## Getting the most from nitrogen

A bit of groundwork goes a long way in getting the best results from nitrogen. To effectively use nitrogen on your crop, it pays to know your yield, the soil's nitrogen levels and to properly apply.

### KNOW YOUR YIELD

Maximises your return on your nitrogen investment by targeting your nitrogen application to your expected yield. Tools such as the AmaizeN calculator (for maize) or the Ballance Brassica Calculator are handy for refining your predicted yield. If you have cut corners during establishment, nitrogen side-dressings won't help you catch up. When estimating yield, take into account whether the pH or nutrients for the crop at establishment were in the optimum range. Also take into account whether starter fertiliser was used (including boron for brassicas and fodder beet).

### KNOW YOUR SOIL

Testing to find out how much nitrogen your soil will supply to the crop allows you to work out how much to top-up from the bag. Soil on former pasture land may release quite a

bit of nitrogen from built up organic matter when cultivated, whereas land cropped over a number of seasons may have low organic matter reserves. Organic matter mineralizes to mineral nitrogen during cultivation, causing the release of plant available nitrogen. For cereals, a mineral nitrogen or 'deep N' soil test to 600 mm can be taken prior to side-dressing to assess the nitrogen that is immediately available to the crop (as nitrate and ammonium). For brassicas and maize, an Available N test, taken to 150 mm, indicates the potential nitrogen that will be released over the growing season.

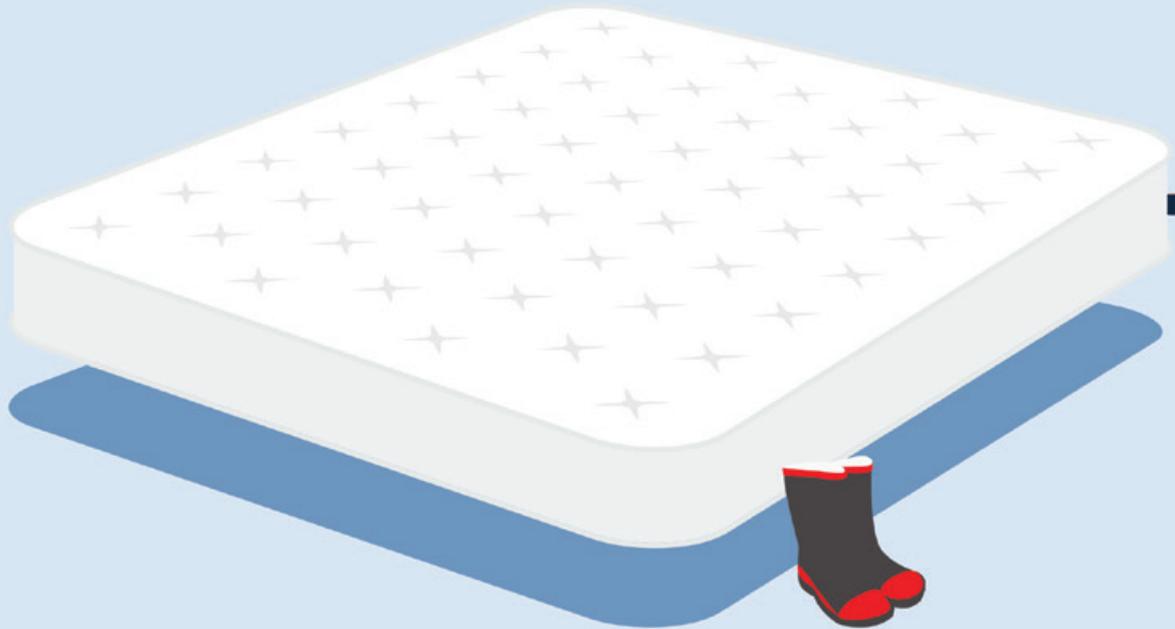
### APPLY WITH WATER

When applying nitrogen as urea, you need 5 to 10 mm of rain (or irrigated water) within 8 hours to get the nitrogen into the soil. Otherwise it losses occur into the air as ammonia gas (volatilisation). Volatilisation increases when there is low rainfall, high temperatures, high wind speed, high soil pH, bare or open soil or when high application rates are used. Volatilisation can exceed 30% when urea is used for side-dressing crops, mainly due to high application rates and open or bare ground. Sustain is easy to use as you do not need certain rainfall conditions to apply it. It also supports crop yield by helping to keep nitrogen in the soil for longer.

If you've done your groundwork, kept the weeds under control and used the right product but are still not getting the expected response, then use herbage tests to check for trace element deficiencies.

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# Sam Whitelock on managing stress to stay Farmstrong



**Rugby has taught me heaps about how to look after yourself and handle stress. I reckon rugby and farming are similar that way – there’s always pressure to meet targets and achieve results and there’s always stuff you can’t control. For me it might be the ref, in farming it’s the weather.**

WORDS & IMAGE SUPPLIED BY FARMSTRONG

Pressure is pressure, whether it’s work or sport. The good news is that there are ways to manage stress and control how your mind and body reacts to it.

## Rest and recovery time

Even though rugby players practice heaps and play high intensity games, we still build plenty of recovery time into our schedule. This gives us a chance to recover physically and mentally so we can perform at our best next time.

No-one can go ‘hard out’ all day, every day without breaks. That’s the stuff of burn out. So building proper breaks into your working day and week is key. Take an afternoon off every once in a while and get off the farm regularly to catch up with mates. Good recovery time makes you more energised and efficient when you are on the job. It’s absolutely essential.

## Sleep

Sleep’s massive. Make sure your body is getting seven to nine hours of sleep so it has a chance to re-energise for the next day. Without the right amount of sleep, you won’t function at your best. If you’re having trouble sleeping because of worries, write them down on a bit of paper and save them for the next day. You’ll feel more in control and be asleep again before you know it.

## Nutrition

Whether you’re farming or playing pro sport, you need the right ‘fuel in the tank’. Eat unprocessed, natural foods - they’ll give you heaps more nutrients and energy. Try not to skip meals and if needed snack in between

meals for energy boosts. If you’re thirsty, have water handy. Poor hydration can really affect your decision-making and ability to perform.

## Keep ‘farm fit’

Whether you’re a farmer or a lock, warming up before you work will definitely extend your career and improve your mood. Do simple stretches before you hit the woolshed, the milking cups or drive the tractor. This keeps the body flexible and prevents you picking up unnecessary strains and niggles that really wear you down.

## Stay Connected

When you’re under the pump it’s good to talk about things and share the load. Everyone’s been there and everyone needs support. So, catch up with your mates regularly. Small daily connections can really make a big difference to how you handle stress.

## Keep Perspective

If a line out isn’t working, most people will stand really close to it because they are so keen to get involved and fix things. But actually, the best place to stand is 25 metres back. There you can see everything and analyse whether it’s the throw or the jump that hasn’t worked. It’s the same on the farm. If something isn’t working step back and get a ‘helicopter’ view. You’ll make better decisions as a result.

## Keep Your Cool

When things aren’t going my way as captain, it’s tempting to get everyone in the huddle and vent. But that’s the worst thing to do. People won’t hear my message at all if they see me flustered. So when you’re under the pump, don’t lose your rag. Take a breath, walk to the gate and back and gather your thoughts. Then calmly deliver a clear message. This is the sign of someone who can perform under pressure.

Working on these habits help me cope with the ups and downs of sporting life. I know that they will also be incredibly useful when I am back farming. And that’s what Farmstrong’s all about, looking after the farm’s number one asset—you! Remember, investing in your wellbeing now means you will have something to draw on when you are under the pump.

Farmstrong is a rural wellbeing programme that aims to help farmers and farming families live well to farm well. To find out what works for you and “lock it in”, check out our farmer-to-farmer videos, stories and tips on [www.farmstrong.co.nz](http://www.farmstrong.co.nz).

# Preventing facial eczema

Summer is just around the corner and with that comes the risk of facial eczema (FE).

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY CHRIS GLASSEY, DAIRYNZ

If you have treated cows for this disease, you will know how unpleasant it is. Unfortunately, the damage it causes to cows' skin is just a symptom of what's occurring internally to the animal's liver. Now is a good time to get a plan in place to make sure you're prepared to mitigate the risk of FE.

The disease is most prevalent in January to May, when warm, moist conditions make it ideal to grow the fungus (*Pithomyces chartarum*) which produces the toxin in the pasture that causes FE.

With no cure, the best way to protect your herd is through prevention.

There are a couple of different approaches you can take. Both include monitoring pasture spore counts and either dosing animals with zinc or spraying pastures with fungicide.

If you notice an upward trend in your own farm spore counts, that's a clear sign you should begin using your preferred FE prevention method. Anything over 15,000 is considered a risk, and over 60,000 a high risk. Aside from using zinc or fungicide, another good approach to protect your cows is to avoid grazing below 4cm pasture height using supplements when appropriate.

It's important to note, FE is just like an infestation. If one cow has FE symptoms, it's likely more are affected, even if they're not showing signs.

Some indicators to look for in your cows include restlessness, seeking shade, licking their udder and reduced milk production.

Breeding cows that are more tolerant to FE is a long-term solution, and some farmers that have gone down this path are already reporting the benefits. This is probably our best strategy to manage this challenging disease in the long-term.

The sheep industry has been breeding for FE tolerance for the last 30 years with great success. I think it's something for us to aim for.

Wouldn't it be great if we could put an end to this nasty disease once and for all? Now that's something I would love to see happen in my lifetime.

For more information on facial eczema, how to prevent it and treat it, visit [dairynz.co.nz/facial-eczema](http://dairynz.co.nz/facial-eczema).



RIGHT: Chris Glassey is a DairyNZ farm systems specialist

# New facial eczema research

New research shows facial eczema (FE) may be an even bigger problem than we first thought. VetEnt veterinarian and researcher Emma Cuttance who led the study, which involved eight dairy farms who had cows with evidence of liver damage across Taranaki, Waikato, Northland and Bay of Plenty in autumn this year, found there was a lot of unseen damage that farmers didn't know about.

Generally, it was thought that there wasn't a lot of FE seen last season. However, the study found there was substantial damage, even in herds attempting prevention.

Emma found 41 percent of the cows studied were impacted by FE, despite only three percent showing symptoms. This goes to show that just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it's not happening.

She also measured the impact this had on loss of production by comparing the average amount of milk collected from healthy cows and cows with FE. She found cows with liver damage produced about eight percent less milk per day.

Another study also measured the impact of FE on young stock growth. It found 19 percent of the 1050 heifer replacements at 17 various locations were found to have severe liver damage. Another 21 percent had some liver damage. Damaged animals were 15kg lighter on average at first calving compared to their peers. This can have a long-lasting impact including lower in-calf rates, later calving and lower milk solid yields.

BELOW: Vet William Cuttance from VetEnt spore counting

## FARMER CASE STUDY

### Farmer faces FE challenge

Waikato dairy farmer Gavin Fleming and his family have battled facial eczema (FE) on their Otorohanga farm for the past 50 years.

Gavin says for as long as he can remember FE has been a challenge on the farm his father bought 62 years ago, some years worse than others.

He puts this down to the farm's north-facing position. North facing areas tend to have higher spore counts than south facing.

However, over the last five years he and his son Paul have really managed to get on top of the disease.

Up until then, despite following best practice—closely monitoring pasture spore counts and regularly drenching zinc—the pair struggled to prevent the disease.

Determined to get to the root of the problem, they did some research and worked with their local vets, who ran blood tests which revealed the issue. They discovered they had been under dosing zinc. "It just goes to show it's critical to get your levels right," says Gavin. "We drench our milking herd daily to keep their zinc levels up." However, Gavin finds zinc bullets (which slowly release a consistent dose) a more practical option for their young stock.

His key advice for farmers is to be vigilant about monitoring spore counts.

The farm was one monitored in the FE study and found none of the cows sustained any liver damage.

Gavin says it was great to be a part of the study and get confirmation that everything they are doing is right.

Like many farmers, he can't wait to see what developments lie ahead to prevent the disease.

"I'd really love LIC to breed some FE resistant bulls. Over time, I'm sure it will happen. Until then we're stuck with trying to prevent it."

### STEPS TO PREVENT FE

- **Monitor pasture spore count on your farm from the same four paddocks every week:** When the spore counts start to rise to trend upwards to 30,000 spores/g pasture start your management program. Do not stop your management program until the spore counts are consistently low across those paddocks for at least three weeks.
- **Zinc dosing:** Weigh a representative sample of at least 20 cows from each mob to calculate the correct dose of zinc required which can be administered as a drench, dose water or in feed. Start your zinc dosing program when the spore counts start to rise. After two weeks, check that your cows are receiving enough zinc by blood testing 15 cows and checking for zinc concentration. Work with your vet to tweak your management system if they are not receiving enough zinc.
- **Pasture spraying:** A fungicide will slow the development of the fungus and subsequent production of new spores. Apply only when you are sure that spore counts from multiple paddocks are below 20,000 on your farm and pasture is green and growing.
- **Pasture management:** Avoid grazing below 4cm pasture height during summer months.



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# Allied Petroleum's 25 Year Birthday Celebration



2018 marked Allied Petroleum's 25th year in business, so throughout the year we have been celebrating this significant birthday.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ALLIED PETROLEUM

We know we wouldn't have reached this milestone without the support of many

businesses, farms, people and communities over the years—so this year we've tried to give back.

Throughout 2018 we have run competitions and given away prizes, including one lucky dairy farmer (and Rural Exchange listener) who won a family holiday to the Gold Coast. We've run a Facebook promotion where nightly Hunting and Fishing vouchers were up for grabs, hosted customer functions at car racing events, we

even shouted an entire local primary school Mr Whippy ice creams. And we're not done saying thank you yet.

We recently held a Gala Dinner at Bill Richardson Transport World in Invercargill to celebrate our 25th Birthday, and again it was another opportunity to acknowledge those who've helped along the way. We were honoured to have not only long serving employees present, but suppliers and customers also made the journey south for an evening of celebration. It was an evening of fantastic food, great people, and wonderful stories about the life of a business that started with just four trucks in 1993.

Ruralco and Allied Petroleum have enjoyed a very long and fantastic partnership, each contributing to growth of the other. We look forward to celebrating Ruralco's silver anniversary next year, and here's to 25 more.



The Allied Petroleum team celebrating 25 years

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# Offering Ruralco customers the convenience of three locations

Owners, Sean Reilly and Carolyn Cameron are proud to be offering Ruralco services throughout Ashburton with pharmacies located in three convenient locations: East Street Pharmacy, Allenton Pharmacy and Three Rivers Pharmacy located in the new Three Rivers Medical Centre.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY EAST STREET PHARMACY



All three pharmacies offer traditional dispensary services but in addition each has its own unique character. Not only is Ruralco available in all three pharmacies but in addition the pharmacies offer a Ruralco discount. "We're the only Ruralco pharmacies in town and also offer a discount across the board on all shop purchases—I think that's a real benefit for our clients" advises Sean.

Three Rivers Pharmacy offers customers the ultimate in convenience being located in the Three Rivers Medical centre, so prescriptions can be filled immediately after a doctor's visit—"we work very closely with the medical centre staff to give the very best patient care" Sean explains. The pharmacy also provides a range of diet and health products in the retail area. Thanks to a shared database, customers can also pick up prescriptions at nearby Allenton Pharmacy instead of Three Rivers, and repeats can be dispensed at either, "we do try and make things as easy as we can for our customers, especially when someone is unwell, and we do whatever we can to assist them."

Allenton Pharmacy has been a long-standing establishment in the community for many years and since pharmacists Carolyn and Sean took over in 2000, they have preserved this vital local hub. As well as providing dispensary services, the pharmacy offers a range of essential

services to local residents and ensures customers' diverse needs are met. "The Post Shop service at the pharmacy is vital to local residents as it means they don't have to go into town, the main reason we keep it on is for the convenience of local Allenton residents" says Carolyn.

Thanks to a large retail space, the pharmacy also stocks an extensive range of giftware managed by the expert team of Marie and Gail who take huge pride and passion in attending gift fairs and stocking and arranging their wonderful wares. As well as standard seasonal gifts—for example at the moment they have a great range of Christmas decorations - they also carry a range of gifts for all ages and tastes. "I'd like to think we have something for everyone here, beautiful home and table ware, scarves and fashion accessories as well as the standard beauty products and

cosmetics. We also do some great children's toys and gifts and of course Gail and I enjoy offering advice and helping our customers find the perfect gift and wrapping it nicely. Customers can drop in a prescription and pick a gift and even post it while they wait" says Marie. Allenton pharmacy also stocks a comprehensive range of over the counter pharmaceutical and medical products, health supplements, fitness and lifestyle ranges and all the friendly staff are trained to give advice and assistance. It also opens on Saturday morning in order to accommodate customer busy working schedules. A passport photo service is also available.

East Street Pharmacy is another traditional local pharmacy with historical items in the pharmacy dating back to the early 1900s. This is Carolyn's base and she enjoys the opportunity to build a rapport with her patients and establishing how she can best help them. The pharmacy offers free delivery on prescriptions and 1-month trials of Medico Paks which are convenient pharmacy-prepared packs of all your medication in one easy container. She's also happy to visit patients in their home and discuss medical treatment options with them and their families—not just for her East Street patients but for any of the patients in the three pharmacies. Patients can request this directly or via their GP or nurse. Owning and operating smaller community focused pharmacies allows Carolyn to spend time with patients and help determine the best treatment plan available. "At the end of the day that is why we are here, to provide the best and safest level of patient care to our clients."

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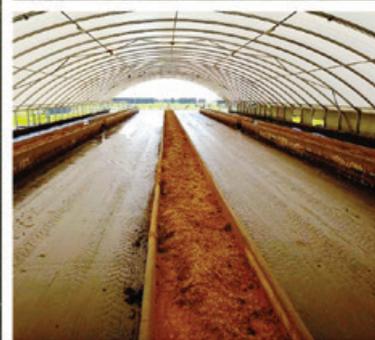


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# The Girls Night Out



1. From left Karen Peck, Laura Freeman, Jackie Freeman, Esmá Hill, Morgan Treleven Peck and Maxine Peck / 2. Nicky Loe and Mandy Hurst / 3. Lynne Barr and Katie Barr / 4. Karen Tarbotton, Rae Wilson and Fiona Keir / 5. Laura Doody and Alannah Bell / 6. Sheri Saunders and Jenny McLauchlan / 7. Sonya Bishop, Sue Green and Brans Surridge

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# Arable Ys set path to farming future



For young arable farmers wanting to learn more, try more and discuss more about crops, while enjoying some good company, Arable Ys is an initiative that provides them with an ideal forum. WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGE BY AMY PIPER

Arable Ys is a Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) initiative established with one eye on helping the next generation of arable farmers become confident, capable operators, namely generation "Y".

The group was established after FAR identified a gap in the industry's knowledge chain that put it at risk of losing the impetus and momentum that younger farmers bring to any organisation.

By far the majority of growers attending FAR field days and seminars were over 35 years old, and in fact accounted for 90% of attendees.

Original organiser Richard Chynoweth of FAR said there was nothing available for younger farmers and staff.

"So we decided to form Arable Ys to meet monthly, with those meetings tailored to the needs and knowledge gaps of this younger and less experienced group of farmers."

The group usually meets on the third Wednesday evening of the month in the Ashburton Hotel, while also including daytime sessions on farms to gain a first-hand impression of new developments, crops and techniques farmers are engaging with.

The evening topics may typically cover pest and weed control issues, aspects of nutrient and water management and spray strategies.

On farm sessions will include a look at crop choices, rotations and systems.

But the most popular on farm seminar held in recent months discussed pathways to farm ownership and was attended by over 60 farmers. A workshop addressing farmer mental health, was also very well supported.

Arable Y farmers have also enjoyed the opportunity to travel further afield to visit other cropping operations and research centres.

In 2013 the group visited Cereals, the United Kingdom's premier cropping field days. The trip also included visits to farms, agrichemical companies, machinery manufacturers and seed companies throughout greater Europe.

In 2015 young growers from the group travelled to the United States, exploring the massive cropping industry there.

This trip included the states of Oregon, Chicago, Kentucky and Tennessee, and included visits to tobacco growing operations, horses studs and a distillery. This trip as described as an eye opener for many of the Arable Y travellers, appreciating New Zealand's climate, supporting infrastructure and diversity of cropping opportunities.

More recent study trips have included another visit to the United Kingdom and Europe this year, and a visit to South Australia last year.

Ruralco is a key supporting sponsor for Arable Ys, recognising the huge role arable cropping plays in the co-operative's heartland of Canterbury.

The support means Ruralco enjoys a direct link to the country's arable future, providing timely and useful feedback on where the arable industry is heading, and the key issues and concerns occupying the minds of its best operators.

A key link to the arable sector at Ruralco is Ruralco Seeds, an independent supplier of high quality seeds and expert advice on getting the most out of growing quality crops in Canterbury. Ruralco Seed is also a buyer and seller of grain, particularly wheat and barley to local and nationwide buyers.

Ruralco Seed Sales Manager Craig Rodgers says being involved with Arable Ys is a positive way to influence and support younger people in the industry.

"Really for us they are the future of farming and this industry."

Ruralco Chief Executive Rob Sharkie says sponsoring the Arable Ys was an easy decision for Ruralco, given the significance of the sector throughout Ruralco's catchment.

"These young growers are keen, motivated and highly committed to their industry—it is a pleasure to help nurture that and be part of their highly successful enterprises."

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- Hot dipped galvanised

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### EXTRAS

- Hydraulic over-ride disc brakes
- Stock crates
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## Salt Dough Ornaments

### YOU WILL NEED

- 1 cup of flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 1/2 cup of water
- Acrylic varnish, paints (non-toxic), and brushes
- Glitter
- Ribbon
- Rolling pin
- Cookie cutters
- Drinking straw



### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 120°C. Measure flour and salt, then add them to a medium mixing bowl and stir.
2. Add water. Mix thoroughly. Sprinkle parchment paper with flour and knead dough until it's soft and pliable. Add more flour if it's ultra sticky.
3. Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out the dough to 1/4 inch thickness.
4. Cut out ornaments using cookie cutters. Peel away dough and lift cutout, place on lined baking tray.
5. Using your straw, create a hole for the ribbon that will hang the ornament. Place ornaments in the oven and bake for two to three hours, or until completely dry. Flip once while baking, then remove and allow to cool completely.
6. When the ornaments have cooled, decorate them with paints and/or glitter if desired. Paint 3-4 thin coats of the varnish all over.
7. Tie ribbons through holes and hang.

## Snowman Candle

### YOU WILL NEED

- White candles in glass jars
- Glass-friendly paint
- Small paintbrushes
- Ribbon
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun
- Buttons
- Twist ties



### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Paint on the snowman's face. We gave ours coal-black eyes, a mouth and plus an orange carrot for a nose. Handle delicately until dry, or if you have time, wait a day for the next step to allow paint to full set.
2. Tie your ribbon to make a scarf, securing each side with hot glue. Optional: Cut fringe into the ends with sharp scissors.
3. Use the hot glue gun to attach a neat row of buttons. These will be secure and dry within seconds.
4. Fold a twist tie in half and twist the ends to look like branches/arms. Add a dab of hot glue and attach to your snowman underneath his scarf. Repeat for the other side.



# Help Rufus decorate the tree for Christmas

Once completed, get it to Ruralco by 21 December and you'll be in to win great prizes!

NAME AGE MEMBER NO.

--	--	--

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:**

- There are two age groups and prize packs allocated per age group: age 4–7 and age 8–11.
- Please ensure the family Ruralco account number, age and name of the entrant is submitted with the entry.
- All entries must be received by Ruralco no later than 4.30pm, 21 December 2018. Either drop it in to any of the Ruralco stores or post to PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740.
- Winners will be announced on 18 January 2019.
- One entry per child only.
- Ruralco reserves the right to publish all entries and details of the winners. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Once the judging has taken place, winners will be notified by telephone.
- The prize is not transferable or exchangeable and Ruralco reserves the right to change the prize to the same or equal value at any time if the prize becomes unavailable. No responsibility accepted for late, lost or misdirected entries.

Additional copies can be downloaded from [www.ruralco.co.nz/kids](http://www.ruralco.co.nz/kids)

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# Co-op News

## Switching to electronic statements is great for us all

Every year at Ruralco we spend in excess of \$100,000.00 to send out paper statements and we believe that's money that could be better spent supporting you in other ways.

Plus think of the mountains of paper in your office that could be eliminated if we emailed your monthly statement to you!

You can also view your statements online.

Make the switch now by calling us on 0800 787 256 or go to [www.ruralco.co.nz/Services/Account-Options](http://www.ruralco.co.nz/Services/Account-Options)

## Make your accounting faster and easier

Ruralco can export your monthly accounts to both Cash Manager and Xero accounting software. Contact Ruralco to set up a solution that best suits your needs to make doing your monthly accounts easier. For more information check out [www.ruralco.co.nz/Services/Account-Options](http://www.ruralco.co.nz/Services/Account-Options)

## Driving your savings

With higher fuel pump prices, we want to make sure you can save as much as possible.

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This means you pay the price at the pump and you receive a rebate of 12¢ per litre on your monthly statement resulting in significant savings on fuel. Terms and conditions apply.

Find out more at [www.ruralco.co.nz/fuel](http://www.ruralco.co.nz/fuel).



## You can now use your Ruralco Card at Mitre 10 in the North Island!

We are excited to announce that you are now able to use your Ruralco Card at Mitre 10 stores around the North Island.

Plus, you can swipe your Airpoints Card with your Ruralco Card purchases at Mitre 10. This means you can get the discount through Ruralco and the points on your Air New Zealand Airpoints card at the same time!



## Free ham on us!

Get a free ham on Ruralco when you buy 2 containers of 360 Glyphosate 20LT or 3 Ecotain Packs, before 24 December 2018.



## The perfect gift for the whole team this Christmas

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## Smiths City

If you're looking for a gift for Christmas try Smiths City—the deals Ruralco have in place are amazing! With cost plus deals for appliances, furniture and bedding among the available offers, you can get the the best gift for that someone special. So before you buy check out the Ruralco Cardholder's price at Smiths City.

# New Ruralco Card Suppliers

## Dates for your diary

### 6 December

#### Ruralco Christmas Event in Ashburton 9am–8pm

Join Ruralco and selected suppliers in Ashburton for all your Christmas shopping.

### 25–26 December

#### Christmas Day Holiday & Boxing Day

All Ruralco stores will be closed Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 December for Christmas. If members have any emergency requirements the duty manager can be reached on 03 307 5100 or 027 487 6865. Closed Saturday morning 29th December also.

### 1–2 January

All Ruralco stores will be closed Tuesday 1 January and Wednesday 2 January. If members have any emergency requirements the duty manager can be reached on 03 307 5100 or 027 487 6865.

## Farm Safety Manual and Training for Members

Today's farmers and land owners are required to actively manage all aspects of health and safety around the farm. To assist with this process Ruralco plans to provide members with access to a farm safety manual and relevant training, this training is run in conjunction with Compliance Partners, a locally owned H&S provider. Compliance Partners are currently working a H&S APP that will make on farm H&S even easier to manage.

Training dates are subject to numbers and will be confirmed for December/January 2019 for \$550 plus GST. Location for the course is in Ashburton but if there is a need we can arrange another training date in Timaru. Seating is limited so get in fast. For more information or to reserve your spot please contact Peter Jacob on 03 307 5124 or 0800 RURALNZ (787 256), Peter.Jacob@ruralco.co.nz.

If you have a Health & Safety plan in place, please send us a copy so we can put it on file for our staff to read before coming out to your property.

## Lift pasture performance on your farm

There's still time to sow new pastures or renovate damaged ones and Ruralco Seed is here to help. Make sure your early summer pasture needs are met, by getting in contact with Ruralco Seed today for details on the pasture packs and to discuss which option is best suited to your farming system.

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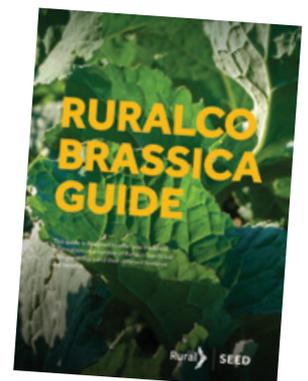
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## Brassica Guide

Ruralco Seed have recently launched an independent Brassica Guide, designed to offer you the latest information on a number of Ruralco Seed's top selling brassica's and their different features and benefits. Get in contact with your Ruralco Representative or call your local Ruralco store to receive a copy of the Brassica Guide.



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027 340 3557



Jarrad Mehlhopt  
SALES  
REPRESENTATIVE  
027 229 9764

Bob O'Reilly  
SEED SALES &  
LOGISTICS  
03 307 5156

Steve Lawson  
KEY ACCOUNT  
MANAGER—ARABLE  
027 245 5661

Sam Dalziel  
TECHNICAL SALES  
REPRESENTATIVE  
027 338 5970

CONTACT US TODAY



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