

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2017



One of
summer's
greatest
delights

Sustainable
beef brand in
farm's future

Broken Borders

Telling the NZ
story to the world

New ATS director
has a passion for
farming

From the Group CEO



Welcome to our first Real Farmer edition for 2017. We hope you have found time over the summer break to catch up with family and friends, and have been able to make the most of the holiday season.

Many businesses take the opportunity to wind down over the Christmas and New Year period, and it often feels like it is mid-January before everyone is back on deck again. That's not necessarily so for us or you farming folk, with some of you facing your busiest time of year during the hot, dry months.

One such rural operation is Smithfield Raspberries run by Grant and Marilyn Smith on the outskirts of Ashburton. They share the success of their horticultural business with us and provide an interesting insight into what makes their very seasonal business tick.

Brookside farmer, Stuart McIlwrick talks to us about his unique beef business and his farming techniques which include using large volumes of compost as a nutrient input. It's all part of his plan to have a product which not only tastes good, but is grown in a way that also respects the environment.

Sharing good news stories on a global scale and delivering a New Zealand brand which captures aspects of sustainability, social responsibility and animal welfare is the aspiration of trade envoy and New Zealand Inc. Champion, Mike Petersen. He tells us about plans which are underway to tell the New Zealand story to the world.

Also in this edition of Real Farmer, we profile busy and passionate Dunsandel dairy farmer, Tony Coltman, who has recently joined the ATS Board of Directors; Nick Pyke from FAR takes a look at the biosecurity risks faced by farmers and what you can do to protect your farm border from pests; and Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics discuss the 'Goldilocks' dilemma often faced when look to meet optimal breeding objectives and the need for new index systems of combined genetic merit which include traits we want to change and traits we want to retain.

All in all, there's plenty to keep you informed and up-to-date. We love hearing your feedback and suggestions. Feel free to call us or catch up in person.

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RealFarmer

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Contents

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2017



Cover Story

2

One of summer's greatest delights



10

New ATS director has a passion for farming



18

Sustainable beef brand in farm's future



26

Broken Borders



56

Telling the NZ story to the world

Interest

- 2 One of summer's greatest delights
- 10 New ATS director has a passion for farming
- 18 Sustainable beef brand in farm's future
- 26 Broken Borders
- 56 Telling the NZ story to the world
- 63 Financial software for better farm management

Technical

- 7 Dairy cow feeding—looking to the next six months
- 9 Gallagher Dashboard gives heads up on data
- 15 Audit saves energy dollars on farm
- 25 2017 wheat competition a growing success
- 45 Fertiliser for autumn-sown cereals
- 49 'Check It' app launches to ensure irrigation efficiency
- 53 Getting it 'just right'
- 59 Focus on the Health, rather than Safety
- 62 Cloud storage basics
- 65 Early detection & management key to pink eye prevention

Card

- 61 Connecting rural people to the world
Netspeed

In Season

- 36 Slug Bait from \$158.50
- 40 Gallagher Fencing Deals
- 44 Save \$30 on Tux



ON THE COVER:
Marilyn & Grant of
Smithfield Berries

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One of summer's greatest delights

What started out as a stepping stone has developed into a successful horticultural business for Mid Canterbury's Grant and Marilyn Smith of Smithfield Raspberries.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME

Even after more than 30 years, if there's one thing that Grant Smith doesn't get sick of, it's fresh raspberries. "You just can't have too many," he smiles.

But while everyone else is sitting back and enjoying their summer holidays, Grant and the team at Smithfield Berries are in the thick of the busiest two months of the year, ensuring the rest of us get to enjoy one of summer's greatest delights.

Grant and Marilyn first purchased the 4.5 hectares block of bare land on Ashburton's northern boundary about 37-years ago. "I was shearing and really wanted to go farming, but land prices were going up as quickly as we were saving. We thought this would be a good stepping stone to buying a farm, but it never happened," says Grant.

While Grant continued shearing, the pair initially farmed ferrets hoping to cash in on the booming fur trade abroad. Known as fitches in the trade, ferrets were originally introduced to New Zealand in the late 1870s as a biological control of rabbits.

Fur was considered a glamour item, conferring both status and style, throughout much of the 20th century. Inspired by what they saw in the social pages and in the movies, most women aspired to own a fur coat. Although ferret never held the same cachet as other furs such as squirrel, farmed mink, American musquash, Australian red fox, Russian marmot, possum and Belgian and French rabbit, it was sought after in Europe and pelt prices were good.

Grant and Marilyn imported fitches from Finland and Scotland, and at the height bred from around 300 females producing on average more than 2,500 pelts in one season all in specially-designed Scandinavian sheds.

However, with the rise of the anti-fur movement worldwide, discouraging consumers from purchasing fur products, the market collapsed almost overnight. "It was great while it lasted. We used to send our skins to Copenhagen. One year we were getting \$90 a skin, but it dropped to just \$15 the next, making it completely uneconomic," says Grant.

Coincidentally, about the same time, Grant and Marilyn planted their first raspberry canes, growing berries on contract for Grant's brother-in-law, who owned the nearby Tuabridge Berry Farm. They had originally planned to harvest the berries mechanically, but later discovered none of the varieties



ABOVE: Marilyn & Grant with a fresh picking of raspberries

they had planted were suitable for machine harvesting, so instead everything had to be hand-picked into large 16 kilogram bins and block frozen for the jam market.

Following the closure of Tuabridge in the late 1980s, Grant and Marilyn opted to go it alone, opening up for gate sales during the picking season. Cane by cane, block by block, Grant started switching over to Willamette, an American-bred variety renowned for its prolific crops of tasty, dark red fruit, and other varieties better suited to the fresh market.

Finding markets was left up to the Canterbury Raspberry Marketing Authority, which dealt with everything and ran successfully for many years, explained Grant.

During the apple and pear boom of the 1990s, which saw 1,000s of trees planted, Grant and Marilyn spotted another opportunity, ripping out more than half of the raspberries to replace them with Taylors Gold pears.

Formed on the back of struggling traditional export markets as a single-desk seller for all New Zealand fruit in 1948, the New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board had a statutory monopoly for more than 50 years, but just as Grant and Marilyn were getting into pears, changes started to occur within the industry. First the local markets were opened up and then the NZAPMB was corporatized into ENZA Limited, followed by the complete deregulation of exporting in 2001. With that, the number of exporters dramatically increased from one to almost 100, while the number of pack-houses and growers subsequently declined.

After a couple of good years, times got tough for growers. Trading conditions were harsh while at the same time the industry was suffering from fragmentation at the export end and a lack of marketing understanding, leading to poor returns. ENZA's decision to pull out of Canterbury entirely left Grant and Marilyn jostling for a share of the tough local market.

By 2008 Grant realised they had a better future in growing raspberries, electing to rip out the last of their pears. "We decided we could make more out of the block from raspberries than we could from the pears," he says.

Today, Grant and Marilyn run a well-oiled, small-scale business, sending fresh premium quality raspberries all over New Zealand, as well as having a loyal local market buying delicious berries, bursting in flavour, straight from the farm gate.

It hasn't all been plain-sailing though, says Grant. "It's taken a lot of trial and error to get to where we are now. The internet wasn't there when we started, so initially we just followed what they were doing (at Tuabridge), but over the years we developed our own systems to suit our varieties. I've always been interested in what and how others were doing it, learning as we've gone along. We also did plenty of homework around the world, from looking at different types of packaging in Scotland to how they were growing raspberries in Kent (England) and Queensland, making changes where we thought necessary."



ABOVE: Grant manages the spraying, regular mowing between rows and pruning largely on his own
RIGHT: Marilyn manages the packing shed, organises pickers and the on-farm shop, she loves the face to face contact with customers

Through the years they've experimented with many different raspberry varieties, recently sticking with Selwyn and Waiau for their consistently good yields and large, juicy, sweet berries. They also grow blackberries and ranui berries providing local customers with an alternative. Ranui's are a hybrid cross between auraberry and marionberry that look similar to a blackberry with a taste comparable to a boysenberry, while their Karaka blackberries taste amazing and are much larger and juicier than the wild variety, explains Marilyn.

Growing raspberries is very seasonal. They require little work in the off-season apart from occasional spraying, regular mowing between

rows and pruning, which Grant manages to do largely on his own, but it's crazy busy during the picking season, from December until the end of January.

Management of the packing shed, organising pickers and on-farm shop falls back on Marilyn. "She's the people-person," laughs Grant, who does his best to avoid it. "She loves having that face-to-face contact with our customers."

Once picking's underway the farm is a hive of activity with 40-50 pickers on site each day, working for a minimum of five hours. Each paid by the kilogram. To begin with their children and children's friends were roped into help, some returning year after year, but now it's mostly foreigners.

Where they used to sell everything block frozen, where possible, raspberries are now sold fresh. The majority are picked and packaged up in 125 gram punnets ready to be sent through

to FreshMax's Christchurch distribution centre where they are sold into Foodstuffs stores nationwide. Their berries can be spotted as far away as Auckland and Invercargill, and the demand is growing all the time.

Although it's tempting to do away with gate sales altogether when market prices are high, Grant says they remain committed to it for the time being.

"The majority of what we grow goes to the market; only a small percentage is sold at the gate. We could sell it all to the market no trouble, but then we wouldn't have that face-to-face contact with the customers. Some people get grumpy at Christmas when we put the price up, but in reality, it is still much less than what we are getting for them at the market," says Marilyn. "It evens out though," Grant's quick to add, "As after Christmas we need those customers when the price dips."

Customers visiting the farm shop are able to buy big 1 kilogram punnets at a price much less than what's on offer at supermarkets, pick-your-own or get bags of Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) berries which are ideal for use all year round if you are looking to cash in on their super health benefits. "We could do away with the pick-your-own tomorrow but it's a truly authentic experience. As long as people don't abuse it, I think we'll keep doing it," says Grant.

For most New Zealanders it's just not Christmas without fresh summer berries, but just how many of the irresistible treats there are to go round essentially comes down to the weather. Even though Mid Canterbury's temperate climate is well suited to growing berries, the weather is still our biggest challenge, he says.

In the wild, *Rubus idaeus* (derived from the Latin for red) originated in the forests in the mountains of northern Turkey. They are pretty resilient, but prefer free-draining soils, lots of sun, winter frosts and plenty of water.

"The dry climate here does suit berries, and certainly helps with the sweetness and fungus. They don't like humidity and the older



varieties need winter chilling, although with some of the newer ones winter chilling is not so important. I always like seeing frosts for raspberries. It's pretty relative as to how they bud, but late frosts and too much rain can cause problems. Colder nights mean they don't ripen too quickly."

Access to additional water is critical with Grant and Marilyn relying on irrigation during the warmer months. "They like lots of water but prefer trickle irrigation underneath rather than over the top. Developments in irrigation over the years have helped. All our new blocks are done using equal pressure drip irrigation, meaning it doesn't matter how long the pipe is, every cane gets the same amount of water which is a big plus."

Hail is the biggest issue, In 2008, a hailstorm wiped out their entire crop with the lasting effects on the canes effecting the 2009 season as well. This season Grant trialled a hail net for the first time and is seriously considering netting the whole property in the future.

Aside from the weather, raspberries are also at risk from other pests and diseases, and that's where Grant's many years of experience comes in to its own.

Grown on a large scale, raspberries require spraying to keep pests and diseases in check (like the raspberry budmoth which is endemic to New Zealand), but it's usually done out of season to avoid the berries being contaminated. Insecticides are typically used over flowering and after picking.

"Having the pears was really good because ENZA ran a programme where you had to justify what sprays you were using, which made you learn about the insects and their life cycle. It makes you look very carefully at what chemicals you are using."

"Like all farming, getting things done at the right time (with raspberries) is important; it's about knowing what needs to be done and when to do it. It's like when you are growing something, you can smell things happening



before they actually happen.....so usually we are months ahead."

They've had their summers dominated by raspberries for years, but Grant and Marilyn wouldn't change it. Admittedly it was tough

ABOVE: Hannah Mae Jerao, 17 into her 3rd year in the packing shed at Smithfield Berries
ABOVE TOP: Rachel Planteau de Maroussem from Mauritius, picking raspberries
BELOW LEFT: Grant & Marilyn want to keep offering the authentic pick your own experience



when their children were little as it meant no summer holidays, but now that their children are all grown up and left home, it's great.

"We love that we are self-employed. It doesn't have to be full-time. It does have its busy times, but it's seasonal. It's really only full on for six weeks of the year leaving us pretty much free in the winter. Now that we are nearing retirement age, it's great because we've got all the systems in place and we can be as involved as much or as little as we want to, employing more people as needed. It's something that we're definitely happy to do for a few more years yet," says Marilyn.

When Grant is not tending to the raspberries, he also runs a small pest control business spraying houses, buildings and silos, as a second income source, which works in well as both businesses are seasonal.

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Dairy cow feeding—looking to the next six months

Our pastures have seed-head forming, which is increasing the fibre level. Increased fibre lowers the degradability, and the total possible DM intake for cows, i.e. cows will eat less, of a poorer quality ration.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY MILKMAP CONSULTANCY & ADVANCED FEED LIMITED

In addition, the extra lignin that is being produced in the pasture is locking up protein, making some of it unavailable to the cows. This will happen for the next 4-6 weeks until we have the autumn flush where protein becomes more available again as the plants become vegetative again. The lack of available protein, and reduced degradability of pasture will further the drop in milk production we have already started experiencing.

As the milk price continues to rise, we want to capitalise on potential production that we can capture, before the rest of the world increases supply to access a better milk price. To do this, we need to reduce the drop in milk production while the pastures are in the reproductive stage, so we can utilise quality pasture when it returns to its vegetative state. This is done by balancing the diet with a rumen degradable protein (RDP) source, as RDP intake is limited from seed head pasture, this will slow the drop from peak.

Once the pasture quality returns, protein supplements that are being fed, can be dropped. From about February onwards, protein has returned, but fibre will remain relatively high for the rest of the season. This will still limit total DM intake as it is more physically filling. Limited DM intake means that cows will

not milk as well as possible, or, will not gain sufficient condition heading toward drying off. With the milk price looking good for this season, it is advisable to make the most of it. Can we bank on it staying good for next season? Hopefully, but it is not guaranteed. The best way to increase total solids produced, is to extend days in milk as long as possible. To do this the cows need to be producing well, to make it worthwhile, and at a good condition score. Body Condition Score (BCS) becomes very important when extending lactation. As the cows reach 60 days (minimum) dry, they have a much more limited time to build condition, and through the last 30 days of pregnancy, all extra energy is partitioned towards the calf. This is part of the reason why building condition while the cows are milking is the most efficient time.

The importance, and financial benefit of body condition score is generally underestimated. Working through the DairyNZ "incalf" herd assessment program, for every 0.1 BCS below the ideal 5.0, at calving, costs your business about \$20/cow/year. This comes from lost milk production, and lower 6 week in calf rates. At 35 cents for grain, you can afford to feed almost 1 kg/day for 2 months per 0.1 BCS below ideal.

This is more than enough to maintain and build condition throughout later lactation, where it is most economical.

In an average scenario, the protein in grass is in excess for milk production for the last third of lactation. We can see this with loose, bubbly manure, and high milk urea values. Excreting excess N has an energy cost to the cow, so with an increased energy demand, and still limited intake due to NDF, it is difficult for cows to continue to produce at an acceptable level, while building crucial BC. Grain is an effective tool to increase production, and increase BCS gain. Grain has a very low NDF, and contains plentiful starch to help rumen microbes capture more of the protein available in the rumen, rather than the cow converting it to urea and excreting it. At 35 cents for grain and feeding 1 kg, you will push out less than 300g pasture, increasing the energy density of the ration by 9 MJME. This is equivalent to 1.5 litres, or 0.13 kgMS (\$0.78), a net increase in profitability of \$0.43 (23% ROI). There will be further production/BCS gain benefits as protein is diluted, and efficiency of feed conversion is improved with a more balanced rumen environment.

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Gallagher Dashboard gives heads up on data

The flexibility of accessing animal data any place, any time has become a reality for farmers using Gallagher weighing equipment.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY GALLAGHER

Gallagher's Dashboard software and mobile app makes late night data entry after a busy day of livestock weighing a thing of the past, and keeps valuable farm data safe and secure in a remote server.

It also gives farmers the flexibility to look up individual animal data on their smartphone or tablet, regardless of where they may be, or what mob that animal may have been in.

"Historically we have always sold weigh systems and EID readers with software to load onto the farm PC, but farmers want that next level where they are not tied to that PC for the software, or for access to that data they download," says Gallagher product manager Daniel Loughnane.

Farmers subscribing to the Dashboard software system will have stock data stored on a remote, internet linked server and can access it through their PC, tablet or smartphone anywhere they have connectivity.

The immediacy of data storage and access to that data has significant appeal to Gallagher's customers.

"Our work has found one thing farmers really want to avoid is having to get back home to the office, and then sit down and load up the data they collected that day when weighing. It is time consuming and doubles up on the day's work," says Daniel.

Through wireless or Bluetooth connectivity with a device holding the Dashboard app, weigh data can be downloaded onto the device as soon as the job is done in the field.

Once the device is hooked to the internet the data will be synchronised with the server, and accessible from any device, anywhere.

While checking stock in the field, farmers can simply enter an animal's tag number to get a record of its weigh history, and check its performance against the mob or the farm average.

For farmers grazing animals on a liveweight gain basis, Dashboard provides easy access via smartphone or tablet to the animals' weight gain history. Remote access via a smartphone or tablet makes it easily shared with grazing clients, stock agents and managers, regardless of where they may be.

As farms get bigger and more jobs are allocated to staff members, the ability to store it remotely and be accessed by those staff members at any time becomes invaluable for sharing useful information on stock performance with entire farm teams, regardless of where that farm team is meeting.

The Dashboard app sits well on any smart device alongside the Gallagher NAIT app, aimed to help make compliance with NAIT tagging and recording easily integrated into farm records.

Gallagher is offering two versions of the Dashboard software, a Dashboard "Lite" and Dashboard "Pro" version, with "Lite" available now.

The Pro version due for release later this year will enable farmers to manipulate the data for mob and per head analysis, include medical treatments and review animal data collected for multiple farms, all available regardless of where they may choose to review the data.

Farmers keen to get on board with Dashboard Lite have the opportunity to sign on for a free 3-month trial period.

Daniel says the level of security farmers can expect using Dashboard is twofold.

"You have the data kept in a remote, secure server, itself a security bonus, but you also eliminate that risk that goes with just having your data on a home PC. There could be years of information that is invaluable to your business, and it just disappears if that computer's hard drive fails, there's a fire, or even stolen."

To find out more about Dashboard contact Ruralco Farm Supplies or your local Gallagher Territory Manager.



IMAGE: Dunsandel dairy farmer Tony Coltman is the newly appointed director for ATS

New ATS director has a passion for farming

There's a well-known saying that if you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. It's an adage which could easily be applied to newly appointed Ashburton Trading Society (ATS) director and Dunsandel dairy farmer, Tony Coltman.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER

By his own admission he can be a bit of a workaholic, but says when you're doing what you love, it doesn't feel like a job.

"I've never wanted to do anything else—farming is where my passion is."

Not coming from a traditional farming background has provided it's challenges and Tony's entry into farming has come in a round-about way. "I had to get into it myself and prove my worth. It's not something I inherited or even grew up with."

Originally from Nelson, Tony's grandfather was involved in the tobacco industry and his parents were a plasterer and a microbiologist, while his brothers pursued careers as an electrician and a radiologist—all quite removed from the agricultural industry. His appetite for farming was whetted somewhat by working on a distant cousin's dairy farm at Brightwater just out of Nelson during the school holidays. On leaving school, he attended Lincoln University where he gained his Bachelor of Commerce with Agriculture (Farm Management) and Diploma of Farm Management (with distinction) before embarking on a career in rural banking.

While at Lincoln, Tony spent some time in Mid Canterbury but it would be many years before he returned permanently to the region. His work took him to various parts of the North Island, and later he had a contract with Westpac in Australia. For a short time he left the agricultural sector to become General Manager of marketing for a print manufacturer in Auckland. "I decided that wasn't for me."

It was after this short foray into city life, and a stint at DairyNZ as GM of its Development and Extension Group, that Tony made the switch to farming. "I spent four and a half years as the GM, Director and Shareholder of a group of dairy farms in Missouri in the United States." The New Zealand owned operation carries 4,000 cows using a pasture based system and Tony says



his ongoing involvement as one of only three shareholders has provided him with a valuable international perspective. "We have monthly calls with the manager, who is also a shareholder, and I also visit annually."

In 2012 he took up a Farm Manager position at Jamieson Dairies in Mid Canterbury—a 365ha 1400 cow operation on Mitcham Road, employing seven staff.

"I've never wanted to do anything else—farming is where my passion is."

Twelve months later he and his wife, Dana Carver, bought into Canlac Holdings and now he is a Manager, Director and Shareholder based at Dunsandel. The 335ha pivot irrigated farm milks 1400 cows, producing 700,000kg MS and employs between seven and eight staff, depending on the time of year. Tony makes up part of the staffing numbers and is still very active on the farm.

"We strive for high performance, production and profitability—we strive for excellence." These efforts have been recognised with the farm being the Canterbury regional runner up in the New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards for the last two years.

Since joining Canlac, Tony has made use of his contacts within the rural sector, and particularly the dairy industry, to take part in a variety of programmes and initiatives aimed at providing and sharing valuable knowledge and

ABOVE: Tony and his wife, Dana Carver, bought into Canlac Holdings in 2012 and now he is a Manager, Director and Shareholder based at Dunsandel

information with others in similar positions.

"We are a monitor farm for FRNL (Forages for Reduced Nitrate Leaching). It's a DairyNZ initiative and we are into year three of a six year project. We joined so we could better understand the environmental footprint of our business and to contribute to the industries understanding of whole environmental issues at a practical farming level with real numbers."

He says taking part will help ensure they are "first of the rank" with sustainable and profitable farming practices, and it will have the wider benefit of providing regulatory organisations and the industry with more factual information to help with decision making.

"There are a lot of organisations and regulatory organisations out there wanting to change things and they don't have all the facts and/or the understanding of the implications of farming businesses and families. So rather than just standing around and complaining about the issues and blaming everyone, I wanted to contribute to finding a solution."

Another DairyNZ campaign the farm is involved in is Rosie's Education, an educational programme aimed at raising awareness about where milk comes from and how dairy farms and the dairy industry work. The programme is aimed at younger children, from pre-schoolers through to primary school aged kids.

"We've had around 400 central Christchurch



ABOVE: The pair have three children—an 18 year old daughter who is heading to Canterbury University this year, Harry who is 15 and Molly who is 12

children visit our farm as part of the programme over the last four years. There's usually one adult for every four kids, so that means there have been around 100 adults who have also learnt more about dairy farms and how milk ends up at the supermarket."

"I am often surprised at how little the kids know about milk. One of the common comments we get is how warm the milk is straight from the cow—they are used to their fridge-chilled bottle of milk." He says they really enjoy being part of the programme and having the opportunity to share their time with groups who wouldn't necessarily get the chance to visit an operating farm.

Tactics for Tight Times is another DairyNZ initiative Tony is part of and was instigated following the recent reduced pay-outs. Focus farms provide a forum for dairy farmers to discuss tactical and strategic decisions at a local level with host farmers sharing information about their systems and tips on how to stay profitable and sustainable during difficult economic times.

Canlac Holdings (Dunsandel) is also a benchmark farm for Lincoln University and as such opens itself up to sharing its production and operational figures. It is another example of the farming operation being open and transparent about its business in an effort to help and provide useful information to others in similar positions.

"I enjoy business and in particular, agricultural business. I want to build on my experience in

senior management positions. That's the next progression for me."

To that end, Tony took part in one of Fonterra's governance programmes last year. "I wanted some governance training and to upskill in that area." He was approached to stand for the ATS Board prior to its Annual General Meeting in November, and decided to give it a go. ATS Directors retire by rotation, and with long-serving Director Phil McKendry not seeking re-election, a vacancy became available on the Board. As the only nomination received, Tony was duly elected.

"I'm excited about my new role. ATS and Ruralco, is and has for a long time, been an obvious competitor in a very competitive market."

"I have waited to get into something local and something that complemented my attributes. I had a rural professional career prior to farming and I wanted to find something I could leverage off of that. I have good common-sense, finance and international experience, and strong farming connections. I also have a sales and marketing background in previous roles and general business and management experience around farm systems."

"I'm excited about my new role. ATS and Ruralco, is and has for a long time, been an obvious competitor in a very competitive market. It is strongly positioned and has stayed competitive, providing good service and pricing to its members."

"It also has a good vibe around its management and staff—there's a good feeling around the whole organisation."

That's important to Tony. Having the right culture within a business is vital to its success. Keeping on top of your game, in good physical and mental shape, is also important. He is an advocate for Farm Strong, an FMG and Mental Health Foundation initiative which promotes healthy and balanced lifestyles and his wife, Dana, leads DairyNZ's Farmer Wellness and Wellbeing Programme. Hailing from the US, Dana has a background in psychology and fitness. The pair have three children—an 18 year old daughter who is heading off to Canterbury University this year, a 15 year old son and a 12 year old daughter.

Tony is looking forward to his time on the ATS Board and says one of the things which attracted him to the position was the business's co-operative status. "I am very much a co-op person and believe in the principles of co-operatives. Central Plains Water, Fonterra, DairyNZ and ATS—they are all co-operative structures. After working overseas in Australia and the US, I really appreciate what we have got in New Zealand."

"We need to protect and enhance what we have got—they don't have these things. We tend to take a lot for granted. It is easy to forget what co-ops have done for us."

Throughout his career so far, Tony has always strived for excellence in whatever he does. He says being an ATS Director will be no different and he's looking forward to his new role in governance and where it will take him.

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ENERGY



Audit saves energy dollars on farm

Two Canterbury farmers have the co-operatives connections to the electricity industry to thank for helping them make significant savings on their farm power bills in 2016.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE



IMAGE: Ruralco Energy Account Manger Tracey Gordon and Meridian Agribusiness Key Account Manager Glenn McWhinnie with farmers Alan Wright above and Fiona Keir below.

Mid last year the co-operative collaborated with experienced electricity industry consultant Jim Miller, offering shareholders the opportunity to learn more about the significant savings they could make on their power bills by changing practices, technology or both on farm.

Jim bought some valuable insights to the seminars, earned through a career spent in the dairy processing and farm dairy sector. His background in process engineering and food processing gives strength to the independent, knowledgeable energy auditing advice he has been giving since 2003.

He played a key role in working with Fonterra and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) in auditing 150 dairy farms over 2010-11 on electricity consumption, which has provided valuable benchmark averages and which he

continues to add data to with his own client's auditing results.

Shareholders who attended the Energy seminar had the opportunity to go into the draw for a free energy audit from Jim, and neither were left disappointed by the savings they were able to pull out of their businesses as a result.

Fiona and Russell Keir of Tullimet Farm near Hinds operate a cropping and heifer grazing operation with 10 centre pivot irrigators on their 400ha.

Winning the energy audit has proved to be very timely for the couple.

"We found that we had been paying line fees and supply charges on a pump that had been moved. They were significant charges too, amounting to about \$5,000 a year, and we had been paying that for a couple of years," says Russell.

He says the contractors who had moved the pump had neglected to inform the power retailer it was no longer at that power point.

"There is not a lot we can do now, but at least we did find it, otherwise we may still be paying those costs."

Russell believes even if it was not free, an energy audit is an invaluable means to assess power costs. "Who knows how many other people are out there paying fees on pumps that have been moved or decommissioned?"

Alan Wright farms a small 58ha grazing property east of Ashburton. Alan admits his operation is probably near the opposite end of the spectrum from the Keirs' in terms of its complexity and intensity of electricity use.

"I only have the one irrigation gun that draws from a submersible pump. But I could see from Jim's presentation there was a lot that larger farmers could get from his knowledge."

But even with his relatively simple operation Alan has the prospect of being able to save about \$2,000 a year in capacity charges on his submersible pump.

Thanks to Jim's advice at the seminar, he discovered his capacity charge of almost \$5,000 a year is higher than it should be for the size of the pump. Once he has definitely determined the submersible pump's true capacity, he anticipates a reduction in the charge.

"And when you compare the likely reduction to the amount of capacity charge I have been paying, that is quite a significant reduction."

Alan said the seminar gave him peace of mind he was generally doing things right to save some energy costs. "That includes irrigating at night on the lower rate."

He says the advice from Jim along with the support he gets from Ruralco Energy are helping keep his electricity bill manageable.

"I make a point of catching up with Tracey Gordon from Ruralco Energy two or three times in recent years, just to check we are getting the best deal we can for our electricity pricing."

He believes the electricity seminars are a "must go" for anyone with a significant power bill.

"I am a small operator, but there are plenty of farms out there that may find they have the potential to save significant sums on what they are paying, just by getting some of the useful advice the seminar offered, and an energy audit."

Jim Miller says many farmers are unaware of the impact capacity charges in particular have on their electricity bills, and are a key part of the bill that deserves close analysis.

"This is particularly the case where they own deep well bores and transfer to a water scheme. The question is always whether it is worth continuing to pay the capacity charge to keep the pump hooked up or do you decommission the pump?"

Jim welcomes the opportunity to get more information out to farmers about the complexities of electricity charging, and what costs can be saved on sites that are often more akin to significant industrial operations than typical farm systems.

To learn more about how Ruralco Energy can help lower farm electricity costs, contact Ruralco Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon on 0800 787 256.

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Sustainable beef brand in farm's future

Branding your own beef is often a passing fancy for farmers who believe they are doing something different to their peers, and want to highlight that as part of their brand story.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY AMY PIPER



IMAGE: Stu is conscious that he is farming in an increasingly fragile catchment not far from Lake Ellesmere

Brookside farmer Stuart McIlwrick is one such farmer. Stu has a five year plan that includes turning his unique blend of traditional and exotic beef animals into a brand that will draw consumers keen to have a product that not only tastes good, but is grown in a way that respects the environment he is so dependent upon. He brings to his farm business a “can do” attitude that has been a recurrent theme through his 30 year farming career.

When Stu first started on the land he opted to rear bull beef. It was an activity more common in the North Island, but one he could see offering some flexibility for his farm business and his own time spent working off farm.

“You could play to the weight gains, you don’t have carcass grading so it means you can cut out stock depending on the gain and the feed levels you had in front of you, making it quite a flexible system.”

The bull beef also proved a means to farm relatively intensively, with a reasonable level of cash flow as stock could be quit progressively.

As dairying crowded around his farm, bulls became less of an option and he opted to start running breeding cows. Usually stalwarts of the high country, Stu departed from the traditional breeds of Angus and Hereford, instead opting for an old exotic breed, the Piedmontese.

“He brings to his farm business a “can do” attitude that has been a recurrent theme through his 30 year farming career.”

“They proved an interesting breed. They have low fat levels, and high yielding carcasses. But because of that low fat level they don’t have a lot of reserve, and pretty much require feeding well every day. Coming from Northern Italy, you may think they are a mountain type breed, but the truth is they are housed over winter, so they are not the sort of robust animal we know in the Hereford or Angus.”

While tasty, the Piedmontese yielded meat that required “some education” to cook properly. Its low fat levels made it more akin to venison than beef, requiring rapid cooking on a high heat to get the best results.

Hearing of a herd of Gelbvieh cattle for sale in Oxford, Stu and a friend visited and liked what they saw in the bulky bodied animals.

“It was the ability to put fat on the frame I liked, adding to the eating experience which was a challenge with the Piedmontese, and they were very high yielding, with good feet and have very quiet temperament.”

Stu started crossing the Gelbvieh with Herefords, introducing a traditional breed with good hardiness, strong beef characteristics and with plenty of good blood lines to choose from.



“The Hereford-Gelbvieh cow has that hybrid vigour and is very hardy. We are building our numbers up to a target of about 50 breeding cows which will be a good number for what we need here.”

His conversations with local butchers have proven highly encouraging, as local butcheries become centres for customers looking for locally grown, high quality, healthy meat.

“I have been told that if I were able to supply, they would be happy to start buying tomorrow, but there are a few boxes to tick yet.”

One of those boxes is coming up with a compelling brand with a good story behind it, and part of that will likely lie in the fact Stu uses copious amounts of natural compost as a nutrient input for his beef operation.

While not claiming to be an ardent environmentalist, he is a farmer highly conscious that he is farming in an increasingly fragile catchment not far from Lake Ellesmere. With that he recognises that what goes on his land can ultimately end up in the area’s relatively high water table.

Stu says he has always looked at alternative fertilisers, having used liquid fertiliser and all with various levels of success.

“But like any fertiliser, you have to apply the right amount at the right time, even if it is nitrogen, it won’t work as well if conditions are too dry or too cold. Compost is no different.”

Compost composition can also vary, with some types containing high levels of straw and organic matter that still has to be broken down in situ to be fully beneficial.

That is part of the reason for Stu opting to use compost sourced from the Christchurch City compost scheme, and marketed as Living Earth.

“It is unique in that it is fully composted when we get it, a deep dark rich compound that is ready to go to work when it’s on the soil.

ABOVE: Son Hayden enjoys helping dad on the farm, they are lucky the cattle are so placid

“To be honest it is not a cheap solution, and that’s often a mistake people make when they opt for compost. However the plant it comes from reflects that. It is a multi-million dollar facility set up specifically to produce a high quality, consistent product.”

He recently applied 500t across 25ha, an amount that sounds significant but surprisingly does not result in the farm being covered in a black layer of product.

As a fertiliser source the compost contains high levels of potash and nitrogen, but both are in an organic form that does not “dump” itself into the soil environment.

“After several years of using the compost he has witnessed a deepening of the topsoil, improved drainage thanks to increased worm activity, and better water retention in the root zone over the drier months.”

Rather it is fungi, bacteria and earth worm activity that releases those elements into a plant available form, over time. Earthworms in particular will pull the valuable nutrients down below the soil surface and into the plant root zone.

Stu will also occasionally use compost sourced from chicken manure which works well alongside the Living Earth compost to provide a “quick fix” of nitrogen boost for growth.

After several years of using the compost he has witnessed a deepening of the topsoil,



ABOVE: The Hereford-Gelbvieh cow has that hybrid vigour and is very hardy

TOP: Stu was surprised by the breeds placid nature and is happy to know he can trust his son Hayden with them.

improved drainage thanks to increased worm activity, and better water retention in the root zone over the drier months.

Stu also has an eye on other aspects of the farm he can tune into the environment. The Brookside property has a couple of

watercourses that he intends to plant with natives, and he has recently fenced off a wetter part of the property from grazing.

Longer term he can see the combination of high quality beef, careful environmental care and a sustainable farm system all rolling into a compelling beef brand that will capture the imagination, and taste buds, of consumers.

"I sometimes sit down with some friends and we will kick around a few ideas—it is an exciting part of what we have been doing, and

I can see us somehow combining the beef breed and name of the farm "Boundary Creek". The next few years will be an interesting time coming up with our brand."

Compost delivers soil a living boost

Making a decent compost is closer to making a cake in practice, with the right ingredients, ratios and temperature essential to avoid finishing up with something that is nothing more than an unsightly pile of rotting organic matter.

But doing that well is something the staff at Living Earth composts in Christchurch have mastered in what is one of the largest and most sophisticated composting operations in the Southern Hemisphere.

Living Earth contracts to the Christchurch City Council to process the city's organic waste into a high quality, saleable compost product. In the seven years of operation the highly successful plant is turning out a consistent product that is in demand as much by large scale farmers as it is by keen home gardeners, and all are converts to the magic it casts upon their soil and ultimately their crops.

"They can all see the advantages of using compost. It goes hand in hand with conventional fertilisers, acting as a soil conditioner."

Living Earth Sales Manager Graeme Wright proudly points out the operation is keeping 60,000t a year of waste from the landfill, an amount close to a moderate sized ship load's worth, with the net output of 23,000t of compost. It is proving a product that delivers sustainable benefits not only before being made, but once it is applied on gardens and farms.

In recent years he has noticed an increase in interest from commercial farmers keen to inject greater organic matter, carbon and worm activity into their soil profile with the compost product.

"We would have 25 regular farming customers on board now, and they are not ordering small amounts."

These clients are regularly ordering 800–1,000t each and he recently delivered to one customer who ordered 5,000t to be put on a farm he had recently bought in North Canterbury.

"They can all see the advantages of using compost. It goes hand in hand with conventional fertilisers, acting as a soil conditioner. At 20t a hectare it will have 460kg of organic nitrogen, but only about 15–20% of that will be released in the first year. It also has a liming effect on soil with 20t a hectare delivering about 500kg of lime a hectare."

RIGHT: Stu with a handful of the nutrient packed compost which he uses as fertiliser
BELOW RIGHT: The fertiliser is used in the maze paddocks which will eventually be grazed by cattle

He estimates it is reducing the need for conventionally supplied fertilise N by about a third once the full benefits of the compost action are in play.

“And that is where people have to give it more than a year. The first year you will not see a lot happen, it is not until the microbes and earthworms really kick in the second year the benefits come through.”

“More and more farmers are aware of the value compost can bring—it may not completely replace conventional fertiliser, but certainly has a role to play being used alongside them.”

He points to brassicas as a crop that do particularly well on soils with compost applied.

“We had a crop that had 25t of compost a hectare and another with 50t. The 25t crop was about where a conventionally fertilised crop would be, but the 50t crop, that was up to the farmer’s chin.”

He says farmers report lower cultivation costs on land with compost applied, with the increased earthworm activity breaking up heavily consolidated soil, making ploughing easier.

Water retention under irrigated systems is also improved, lowering the amount of water required to achieve good growth in summer, on soil that holds the moisture better thanks to improved organic matter levels.

“It is particularly good on our stonier soils for helping build up top soil layers, and as it improves the moisture capacity it also reduces the nutrient losses through the soil profile, something people are particularly aware of now.”

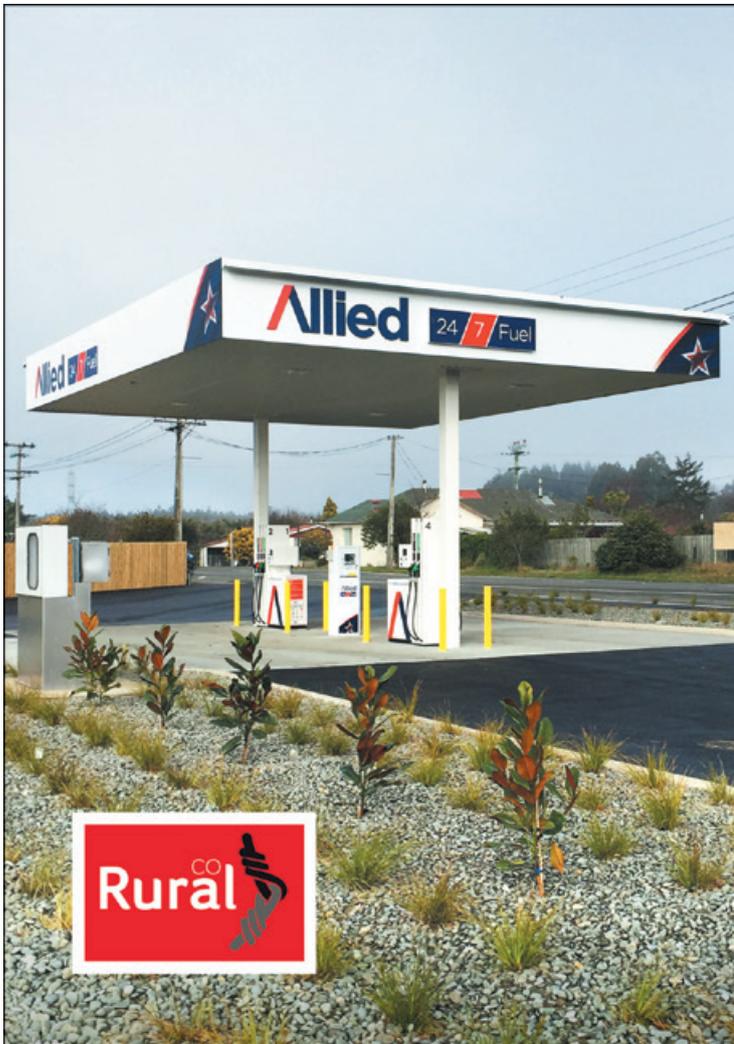
Some high profile farmers using the product include the Clearwaters organic dairy operation near Mt Peel, and vegetable grower Tim Chamberlain of Harts Creek farm.

Plant and Food Research has showed compost increased production of arable crops by up to 14% over a three year rotation period.

Graeme says Stu McIlwrick’s experience with the compost is typical of what many farmers experience. He has enjoyed greater earthworm activity, better moisture holding capacity and pastures that hang on longer over dry spells.

“More and more farmers are aware of the value compost can bring—it may not completely replace conventional fertiliser, but certainly has a role to play being used alongside them.”





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2017 wheat competition a growing success



The popularity of the United Wheatgrowers Competition promises to take another step up in 2017, with organisers anticipating more entries than ever for the high profile event.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

Last year's event had 103 farmers putting their crops in for judging at the Ruralco Seed sponsored event. But organisers are excited by the spread of interest in the competition. While earlier events tended to draw mainly from the immediate Ashburton district, farmers from North and South Canterbury have also put their crops forward.

United Wheatgrowers Director Michael Taylor was optimistic this growth would continue, and says wheat growers from all over New Zealand are welcome to enter the competition.

With four areas to enter, including Feed, Biscuit, Milling-Gristing and Premium Milling wheats, entrants have a wide selection of fields to tailor their particular entry to.

"We also have the Protein Trophy, sponsored by Tegel, which recognises the ability of a grower to deliver the maximum protein yield per hectare. It is a benchmark that is becoming quite important for the feed sector and this indicates that to growers."

Michael says the competition is proving an excellent platform for New Zealand grain farmers to demonstrate the exceptionally high standards their relatively small sector can achieve.

"We are identifying some really valuable niches within the sector that growers are proving very capable of working within." Splitting the competition into the four categories has meant growers can get a clear steer on where they are best to enter, based off their skills, their crop and their land type.

Judging criteria includes moisture, weight, size and milling class, along with a standing crop's colour and appearance.

Michael would also like to acknowledge the support of Ruralco Seed.

"The continued support and assistance from Ruralco Seed is really appreciated, without help from industry sponsors like them these events simply would not happen."

The competition's strength and continuity is being welcomed by farmers who have previously entered it. Ruralco Cardholder and Methven cropping farmer Dale Palmer has won the feed wheat category in the past.

He says the competition is a great opportunity for younger farmers like himself to benchmark themselves against farmers who may have grown wheat for many years. He says it also highlights how despite its small scale, the

New Zealand grain industry is carving out its own niches for high value crops.

Three of the five winners in the 2016 competition were from the wider Canterbury area, with the winners claiming the Feed, Biscuit and Premium Milling classes. David Birkett who farms just out of Leeston won the Feed category for the second consecutive year.

He has one eye on conditions early in this season before committing to the competition, but says it is a worthwhile event to showcase the best of what wheat growers can do.

"I think a little competition in any sector is always healthy in pushing things along," he says. His yield of over 16 tonnes a hectare was one of the best he has had in 10 years and he achieved that with "Oakley", an older wheat variety.

He says with the slide in dairy demand for feed grain the sector is now more exposed to overseas market prices, and it is making growers more conscious of costs and alternative grain income.

"That is why we are seeing a rise in plantings for other types like milling wheat which has also had a big lift in quality over the last few years."

The Biscuit class was won by Colin Hurst near Makikihi, while Premium Milling class was won by Bruce and Grant Perry of Barrhill between Rakaia and Methven.

Group Chief Executive Robert Sharkie says wheat is proving to be an indomitable, reliable crop with multiple uses that has performed year in year out in the province, grown by committed and expert growers.

"They are arable farmers because they want to be, they enjoy what they do and are good at it. The competition is our way of supporting them and encouraging them to continue striving, while also highlighting their work to the rural and general community."

The 2017 competition is open to crops harvested in 2017, with entries closing May 31 2017 and judging taking place in autumn. A prize giving will follow in winter, with prize money up for grabs in all five categories of the competition.

For an entry form contact Ruralco Seed on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256), www.ruralco.co.nz or www.uwg.co.nz.



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Broken borders

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY NICK PYKE, FAR

Summary

- There are a number of biosecurity risks to cropping growers in New Zealand which need to be effectively managed.
- In 2015/16 three incursions, velvetleaf, pea weevil and black grass, have impacted on cropping farmers, requiring significant input from the industry.
- In future some aspects of biosecurity in New Zealand will be managed through a partnership between government and industry (GIA). The cropping industry plan to be part of GIA.
- Biosecurity is important at the farm level and all farms should have a Farm Biosecurity Plan.

What is biosecurity?

Biosecurity is the procedures or measures designed to protect the population against harmful biological or biochemical substances. Thus it includes pre-border, border and post-border biosecurity.

Government Industry Agreements for Biosecurity

Pre-border biosecurity is largely central government's responsibility. As an industry we can outline to government our views in relation to it, but the decision making lies with government. However, under the new Government Industry Agreements for Biosecurity (GIA) system, we will have a say on what happens at the border.

GIA has been developed to manage border biosecurity including readiness and response activities. A GIA is an agreement between government (MPI) and industry that is based on shared decision making and shared costs. The cropping industry is currently developing a GIA of its own which will involve the formation of a new legal entity. Under GIA our industry will sign a Deed and develop an operational plan based on a pathway approach. Although the cropping industry is not yet a signatory to the GIA, the GIA approach was used to very effectively manage a black grass weed incursion in Canterbury.

The final part of the biosecurity is the post-border activity. This occurs once a biological organism has established in New Zealand and GIA have

agreed it is no longer realistic to eradicate or contain the problem. At this point it becomes the industry or your farm responsibility. This is where you should have a plan in place.

Biosecurity threats to the cropping industry include organisms that affect crops directly as well as those that would affect the use of crops in New Zealand. Thus a major biosecurity threat would be foot and mouth, which may prevent movement of grains or reduce demand from a major market for crops.

Identifying specific threats is difficult. A number of weeds, pests and diseases could be selected because of the damage they cause in crops overseas, while others that are not causing a problem elsewhere in the world, could impact on New Zealand growers due to our climate, cropping systems or factors such as agricultural resistance. This, combined with the number and range of crops grown in New Zealand makes it very difficult to develop prevention and response plans for every possible weed, pest and disease threat, which is why our preferred approach for GIA is around pathways eg wind borne plant diseases,



LEFT: Black grass
OPPOSITE: Severe velvet leaf infestation, Waikato

Velvet leaf seedlings continue to be detected on some farms which had velvet leaf last season and it is important that surveillance of high risk sites continues. Management plans are being developed with farmers with higher risk sites to try to ensure velvet leaf does not establish. Trials plans are being developed to evaluate herbicide control of the weed.

Surveillance also continues for blackgrass on a Mid-Canterbury farm. The ryegrass straw from the paddock where the seed was detected has been contained and will be destroyed by burning and burying to prevent any seed present in the straw from being spread.

These incursions are hopefully all contained and in some cases, hopefully the problem will be eradicated. This last year a prolonged focussed eradication programme for great white butterfly in the Nelson area was successful. The pest had limited distribution in the Nelson area and the eradication effort, led by DoC with input from HortNZ, FAR, DairyNZ and the Nelson community, has ensured this pest has not established and will not be a pest on brassicas in New Zealand. This successful outcome provides greater confidence that eradication of weeds and pests can be successful if they are detected early or in small geographic areas.

Do you have a farm biosecurity plan?

The biosecurity risk you can influence most is your own property. Your biosecurity plan is to protect your farm border from incursions of pests you don't have, which may be present in New Zealand. A robust biosecurity plan reduce the risk of many weeds, pests and diseases establishing on your property, particularly herbicide resistant weeds or weeds evolving to be better suited to New Zealand. This could result in significant cost savings for pest control and also potential markedly increase your productivity.

The first step may be to create a biosecurity plan and update it frequently. An easy to use plan is available in the FAR Farm Environment Plan, which is available on the FAR website www.far.org.nz

weed contaminants of imported seeds, insect pests on imported products etc (see Table 1).

The following are a few of the weed risks for cropping in New Zealand.

- Some populations of *Lolium multiflorum* (annual ryegrass) are resistant to herbicides and if these became widespread they could be a significant problem in cropping soils.
- Wild radish is already present in New Zealand and is relatively easily managed in cropping land. However, in some parts of Australia it is a major weed, resistant to four different herbicides groups.
- Black grass is a persistent weed in the UK and Europe where it has developed resistance to a number of herbicide groups.

2015/16: velvetleaf, pea weevil and black grass

These incursions were detected through good surveillance, but all probably should have been detected sooner if good biosecurity was in place across the industry. For all three incursions, the response has been complicated by a poor understanding of the problem and then an inability to respond in a clear time frame and poorly informed people making statements without the necessary information and therefore reducing the effectiveness of the response. Generally good collaboration has occurred for all incursions. Some

of these issues will be addressed in a GIA. There is still significant activity in New Zealand in relation to all three of these incursions.

Recent actions on pea weevil are the monitoring of the trap crops in the Wairarapa and commercial crops elsewhere in New Zealand. In December, pea weevils had been detected in all seven of the trap crops in the Wairarapa and these crops were sprayed with insecticide and herbicide to kill all weevils and remove the host. As the pest is specific to peas, removing all potential host plants from Wairarapa should eliminate this pest. In late December over 175 paddocks elsewhere in New Zealand had been monitored and no pea weevils had been found.

TABLE 1 Assessment of risk for a few different pathways.

PATHWAY	WEEDS	DISEASE	PESTS	VERTEBRATES / REPTILES
Seed borne	No	High	Low	No
Grain & seed contaminants	High	High	High	Medium
On machinery	High	Medium	Low	Low
On containers or other shipping goods	High	Low	Medium	No
In containers or shipping goods	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Airborne	No	High	Medium	Low
On people	High	Medium	Low	No

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Autumn sown forage options

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The majority of New Zealand's livestock industry has the common objective of increasing animal performance. Whether this is through meat or milk production, autumn sown forage crops play an essential role throughout many of these farming systems. Short term, autumn sown forages including oats, triticale, rape and Italian ryegrass can provide a valuable feed source, particularly through the winter months when pasture growth becomes limited.

Autumn sown forage cereals can germinate and produce large amounts of winter feed in a short time under cooler conditions. Coronet and Milton forage oats are both great options when a quick, high yielding and single winter grazing is required. Both of these oats have been bred for disease tolerance, and have the ability to produce between 5-8 t DM/ha from an autumn sowing. Milton is a faster maturing oat than Coronet, providing an increased level of feed from early to mid-winter, while Coronet will deliver a higher quality of feed from mid to late winter.

In cases where multiple grazing is desired or where later winter feed and spring silage is required on farm, triticale provides another autumn sown option. Both Prophet and DoubleTake triticale produce similar yields as oats, with the added benefit of regrowth if sown in the early to mid autumn. Prophet is best suited in situations where late-winter feed and late-spring silage is required on farm. DoubleTake will have a faster establishment rate and therefore a shorter time till first grazing but often produces less silage in the spring than Prophet. The different maturity dates provide an excellent feed management tool for high quality feed throughout the winter period.

Spitfire rape is another option which can be used to produce high quality feed during the winter. Spitfire is a multi-purpose forage rape which can deliver high quality yields between 6-9 t DM/ha. Suited for sheep, cattle and lambs this rape has excellent regrowth potential and aphid tolerance. To get the highest yields out of rape it is best to sow earlier in the autumn than forage cereals.

Autumn sown Italian ryegrasses such as Asset, are a flexible option for providing good winter feed and is a great 18 month forage, regularly persisting through the second winter. Due to its high tiller density, Asset

is ideal for coping with an intensive winter grazing and has excellent summer leaf quality due to its low aftermath seed head.

Both rape and Italians can be affected by sowing date. A rough rule of thumb is following the end of February, every day sowing is delayed, 1% of the potential yield is lost by June 1st. March through until early April is still suitable for sowing Italians, however after this time, oats will be a more suitable option, providing higher volumes of winter feed from equivalent sowing dates relative to Italians. As temperature and day length decreases post February, a reliable way to increase winter yield from Italian ryegrass is to increase the sowing rate.

Autumn sown forages play an essential role in many farming systems. When planting these forages it is essential to understand what you will get from the respective crop and its appropriate sowing window.

To discuss autumn sown winter feed options talk with the Ruralco Seed team today on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

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Ruralco Seed pride ourselves on being a complete independent team able to meet all of your cropping needs. Ruralco Seed offer a full range of seeds and treatments, on-farm services, and on farm representatives who are constantly monitoring a large range of crops, from pastures, fodder beet and cereal crops, and offering contracts to Ruralco arable growers.

As an independent supplier, Ruralco Seed can recommend the best product and solution for your farm, and you can be assured they are giving the best agronomy advice and competitive pricing for your individual needs.



ON FARM CONSULTATIONS

Talk to the team today about your autumn sown crop requirements. Book an on farm consultation today with one of the team and have peace of mind that Ruralco Seed will actively manage your crop, with their expertise and proven products.

Ruralco Seed is dedicated to delivering independent agronomy advice that you can trust to ensure your future crop plans are considered to achieve your desired goals.

AGRONOMY EXPERTS



GRAIN SOURCING

Ruralco Seed also plays a significant role as a buyer and seller in the grain trade market.

The buying and selling of wheat and barley to local and nationwide buyers makes up a large part of Ruralco Seed's grain market activities.



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RURALCO SEED
SALES MANAGER



Bob O'Reilly
SEED SALES &
LOGISTICS



John Scott
GRAIN & SEED
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ARABLE & PASTORAL
REPRESENTATIVE



Jarrad Mehlhopt
TECHNICAL SALES
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THE TEAM

Ruralco Seed Sales Manager Craig Rodgers, along with Bob O'Reilly, John Scott, Steve Lawson and Jarrad Mehlhopt make up the Ruralco Seed team. Between them they have many years' experience within the industry.

The specialist team has grown since the previously named ATS Seed was created in 2009, and has steadily gained traction in a market that must react to global trends as well as local issues impacting supply and demand.



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BUILDING PASTURE RESILIENCE THIS AUTUMN

A key point when considering new permanent pastures this autumn is 'pasture resilience'. By building pastures and systems to work with our environment rather than against it can allow any farm to reach its potential and help maximise production. Consider your unique situation and take into account things like location, climate, stock class, etc. This will help determine what your main perennial species should be and what companion species will be included in the mix to help make it as 'resilient' as possible.

When considering building pasture resilience in your system key steps should be followed. Review your existing pastures to determine which ones are suitable and ready for a perennial renewal programme. This may involve a series of steps to achieve the desired result, e.g. going through a cropping phase to ensure paddock suitability and build nutrients. Decide what condition your paddocks are in to determine which ones will need re-sowing.

Use a simple scale of 1-3, or more complex scale up to 5 to condition score the existing pastures. The key aspects that need to be determined are which pastures are still in a good state and which are not. Even in years with adequate moisture or farms with irrigation, this should be an exercise done regularly, so when poor conditions do occur, whether that's through drought, or very wet conditions, use your poor paddocks as sacrifice paddocks and look after your high performing ones. Repasturing capital needs to be spent wisely on those paddocks in poorest condition that lie in typically higher producing areas. Those areas that grow the most feed are key areas to concentrate on.

With so many options available when choosing suitable perennial species and cultivars, this step can often be confusing. Get trusted advice from Ruralco Seed and pick a range of cultivars that will complement each other and suit your environment and needs. One of the most important considerations for many farmers is cultivar persistence. While this can be attributed to many factors, a focus should be to ensure you choose species that suit your environment.

LONG TERM PASTURE OPTIONS

Making the best choice for long term pastures is more complex than for short term pasture, as production, persistence, feed quality and potential problems must be considered. Some of these problems relate to nutritional balance as well as possible anti-nutritional factors such as toxins that may be present. In some cases these anti-nutritional factors may lead to increased persistence so there may be some trade-offs required in making these decisions.

HEADING DATE

(+ or - days relative to Nui heading date). The heading date of cultivars is a useful tool in selecting a variety that is suitable for the intended purpose. The basis of different heading dates relates to the timing of dry matter production for different environments. Drier climates suit a cultivar that has its production peak before it becomes too dry, whereas summer moist areas can handle a later production peak if required due to there being adequate summer moisture.

SEED FORCE PERENNIAL RYEGRASS DEVELOPMENT

From Seed Force's extensive perennial ryegrass development programme come the addition of two new diploid cultivars bred specifically for New Zealand's unique conditions; these are SF Moxie and SF Hustle.

SF MOXIE

SF Moxie was bred specifically for New Zealand conditions, with features helping ensure a good fit on farm. SF Moxie is a very productive diploid perennial with high yields, including exceptional winter growth. Its semi upright growth and high tiller density means it will fit well into systems requiring a highly productive perennial ryegrass. While it's heading date (0 days), helps ensure good early season performance.

SF MOXIE KEY POINTS:

- Latest breeding for New Zealand conditions
- High levels of winter production
- Heading date of 0 days = early season growth
- Diploid robustness
- Semi upright growth habit
- Bred with broad disease tolerance



SEED



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Your resilient pasture experts

SF HUSTLE

SF Hustle is a mid-maturity (+ 8 days) diploid perennial ryegrass and was bred with New Zealand's high performance farms in mind. Combining excellent production with a mid-heading date helps ensure its suitability to many systems nationwide. SF Hustle performs well in a range of environments with exceptional cool season performance. Upright growth habit ensures compatibility with other species in the sward.

SF HUSTLE KEY POINTS:

- Bred for New Zealand high production systems
- Excellent winter productivity
- Heading date of + 8 days
- Diploid robustness
- Upright growth habit
- Bred with broad disease tolerance
- Sow SF Moxie or SF Hustle as the main grass component, or mix with SF Greenly II new generation cocksfoot for additional pasture resilience.

ADDITIONAL GRASS SPECIES IN PERMANENT PASTURE MIXES

The inclusion of more than one grass species in a mix can really help build pasture resilience, as the different species can complement each other's growth patterns and help extend production when the pasture's production would otherwise be limited. One such species that should be considered as an option to include in perennial ryegrass mixes is new generation cocksfoot.

Cocksfoot as a species has for a long time been considered a persistent option that tolerates dry conditions and insects. However, many farmers noted a lack of palatability with the old varieties. Plant breeders, historically were focused on developing prostrate, low yielding types which demonstrated persistence but little else.

Seed Force's breeding partners have developed a world recognised portfolio of 'new generation' cocksfoots. These new generation cocksfoots are a much different plant to the cocksfoots of old. Seed Force has been at the forefront in testing and developing this new range of varieties since 2006.

SF Greenly II is one of the new generation types and features a number of benefits over cocksfoots that many farmers will be familiar with. The key breeding focuses of SF Greenly II were to offer longevity and production coupled with palatability. Leaf

softness and digestibility were important considerations to help achieve this. While cocksfoot has often been seen as an option in low input environments the new generation types such as SF Greenly II are very well suited to a range of environments, including high input systems. When it is supplied with the same nutrients as applied to typical perennial ryegrass pastures SF Greenly II will impress with its quality and longevity.

The perceived palatability issues surrounding cocksfoot have been largely due to the cocksfoot not having sufficient nitrogen, be it artificial N as fertiliser or supplied via nitrogen fixation from compatible legumes. As with any perennial species, it is important to sow into ideal conditions at the correct time. Cocksfoot sown too late will be much slower than perennial ryegrass, allowing weed invasion and insufficient legume establishment.

SF GREENLY II

SF Greenly II cocksfoot is a robust, fine leaved and upright cocksfoot that produces well in a range of environments. Its soft leaves have less tendency to clump than traditional varieties. SF Greenly II can provide substantial yields of quality forage in environments when other pasture species tend to struggle. New breeding helps ensure palatability and productivity. An ideal companion to any perennial ryegrass pasture to help build resilience. It's a cost effective addition as the sowing rate of the perennial ryegrass component will be reduced to accommodate the addition of SF Greenly II. When adding it to a perennial pasture mix use a sowing rate of between two and five kilograms per hectare for the cocksfoot component. The rate will be determined by the environment the mix is going into.

SF GREENLY II KEY POINTS:

- New breeding = soft leaved variety
- Upright growth compatible with legumes
- Bred for quick establishment
- Performance in New Zealand conditions
- Include in perennial ryegrass mixes to help build resilience and persistence

In summary, the selection of permanent pasture is not as simple as picking just one perennial ryegrass and white clover combination, but it doesn't have to be too difficult either. By following good advice on what is the best combination for your farm will help ensure success. For advice on how to build pasture resilience this autumn or more information on the new Seed Force permanent pasture options; talk to Ruralco Seed today, your complete independent seed & agronomy experts.

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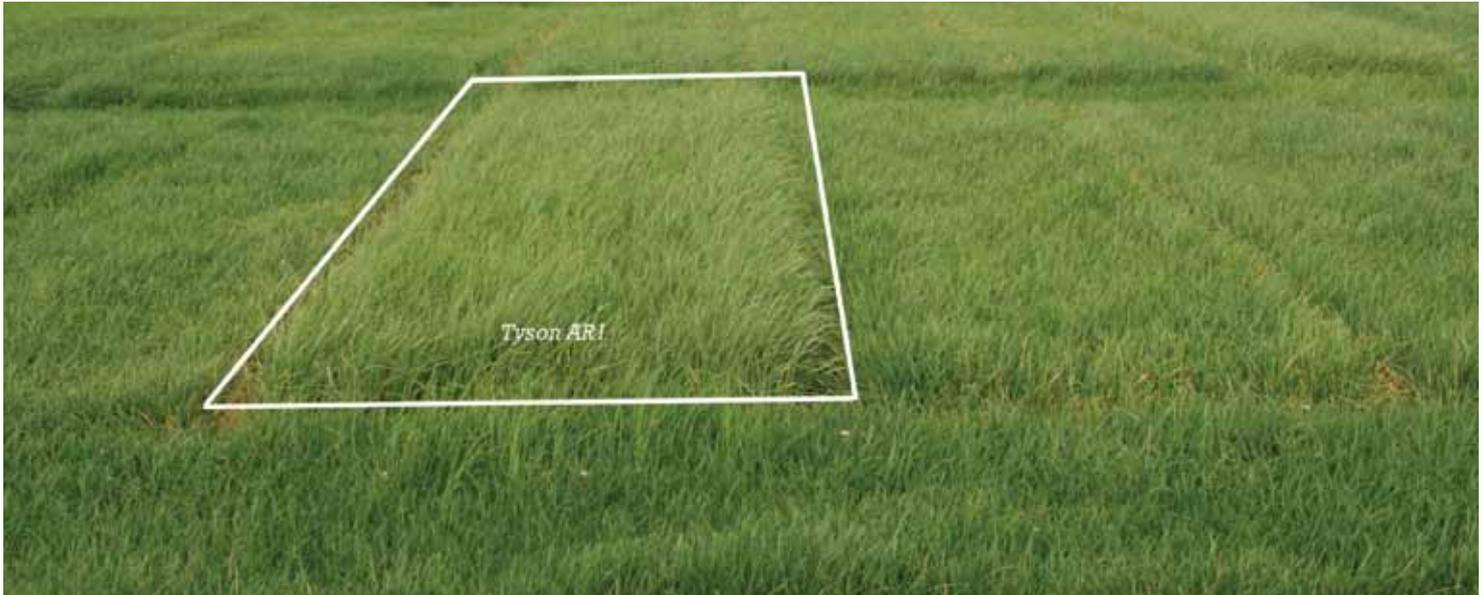
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New pasture bred for more feed at lambing

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



If you could use more early spring pasture to feed ewes with lambs at foot, a new perennial ryegrass from one of New Zealand's leading plant breeders could be a worthy choice for autumn pasture renewal this season.

Tyson is the country's earliest heading ryegrass (-7 days) and grows nearly 20% more dry matter than other leading pasture cultivars during early spring.

That makes it an exciting opportunity for any farmer looking for faster, more efficient liveweight gain and feed growth at the start of the season.

Agriseeds spent 20 years on research and development to create the new ryegrass, and says it combines the best of previous early season cultivars to help deliver a big advance in spring productivity for red meat producers.

Farmers who have grown Meridian and/or Arrow ryegrass will have the best idea of what to expect from Tyson, because it has similar genetics, but it provides better all-round performance.

Meridian was renowned for superb DM growth in August and September, but it wasn't such a great performer in summer and autumn.

So Agriseeds combined its best characteristics with those of Arrow to create a new option, specifically for sheep and beef farmers, featuring both exceptional early spring growth, and very good year-round yield.

A key target in breeding Tyson was to produce a pasture that could help farmers finish more lambs, sooner.

Extra pasture cover at lambing makes it easier to feed both ewes and lambs better before weaning, so more lambs reach target weights in time to be drafted off mum.

This in turn promotes other benefits, Agriseeds says. Early lamb drafts usually coincide with stronger schedule prices, the weaning check is avoided (and with it up to two weeks' lost lamb liveweight gain), and extra feed can be freed up for other stock.

Tyson is particularly suited to farm systems which need to maximise pasture yield and animal growth in spring, before the onset of a possibly dry summer or autumn puts pressure on feed supplies.

By capitalising on genetic potential, both in terms of livestock and pasture, the new cultivar can provide more flexibility and choice.

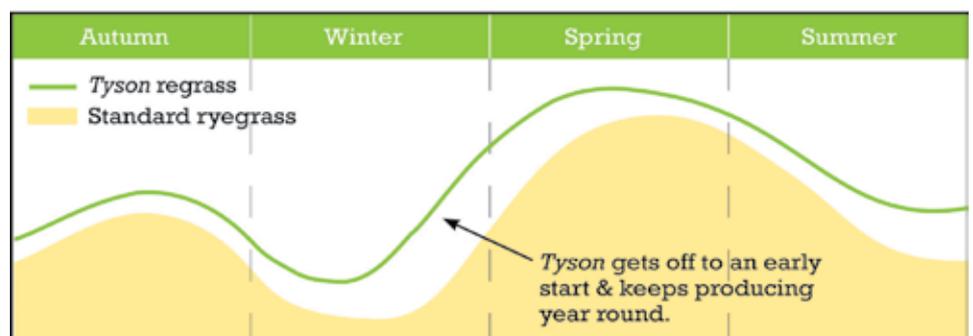
Lambs grow faster on a diet of milk and pasture than at any other time of their lives. Every day is a growing day between birth and weaning, and the most common limiting factor is lack of feed.

Agriseeds stresses that while Tyson has the genetic potential to outgrow any other perennial ryegrass in early spring, the second part to farmers capturing its advantage is having the right management around it. The traditional saying 'grass grows grass' is a good way to sum up what's needed.

Like any pasture, it should be set stocked at the recommended minimum cover of 1,500 kg DM/ha (or 4 cm) through lambing. Otherwise it won't have the leaves to capture enough sunlight to grow to its genetic potential. Set stocking at ≥ 4 cm ensures the optimal early spring growth rates not only for the grass, but also for lambs.

Tyson is available this autumn with AR1 endophyte. Agriseeds recommends sowing it at 20 kg/ha, mixed with a small leaved white clover (Apex) at 2 kg/ha and medium leaved white clover (Weka) at 2 kg/ha.

To find out how Tyson can work for your pastoral system talk to the Ruralco Seed team today on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).





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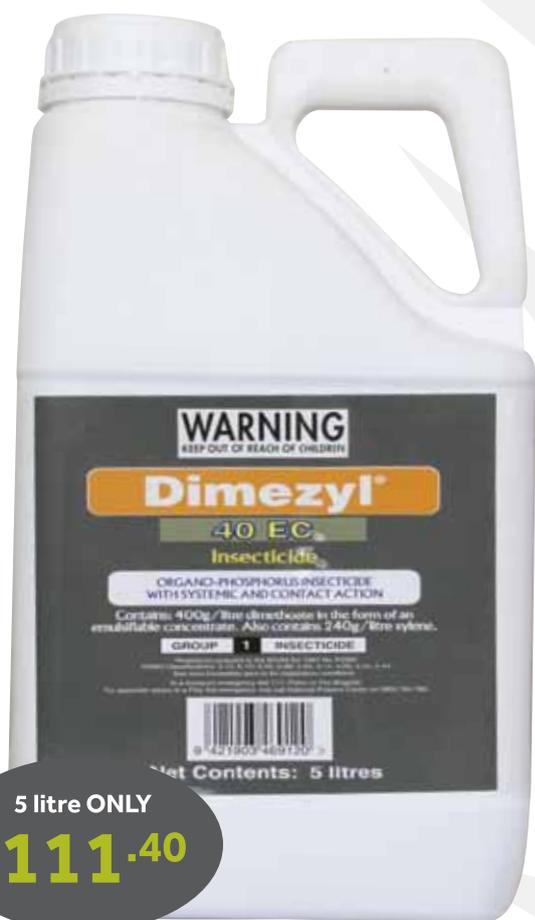
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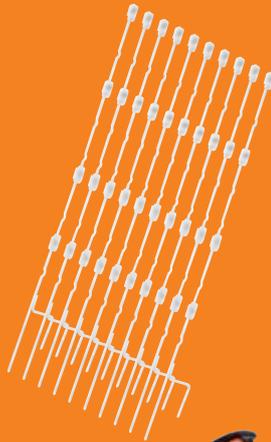
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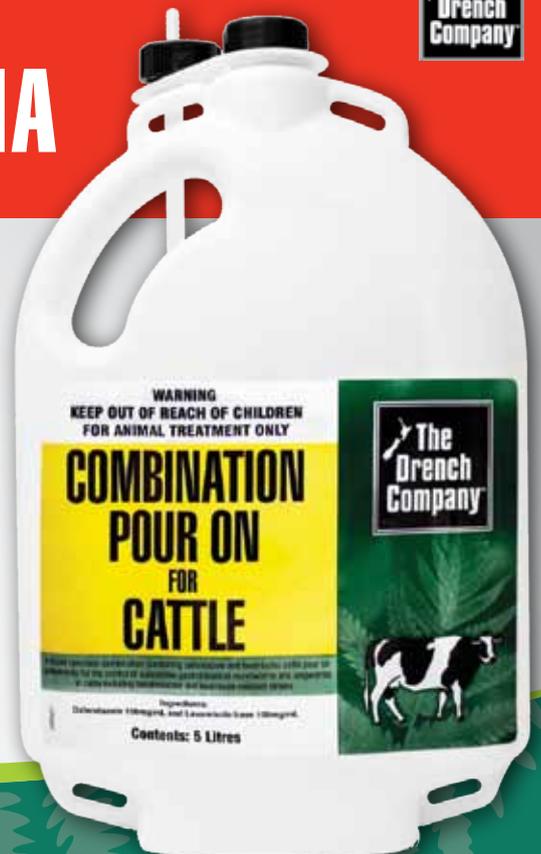


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The importance of adequate mineral supplementation hardly needs emphasising. Nevertheless, it can be easily overlooked in busy farming operations, often with undesirable outcomes. Mineral blocks are increasingly seen as a useful way to meet stock needs, thanks to their convenience, flexibility, certainty of dosage and value for money.

Animal nutritionists are quick to point out that an animal's mineral demands can vary greatly, depending on the type and age of the animal, what crop they are grazing, what season it is, and more. "Even animals that are fed on good-quality pasture may not be getting their daily mineral requirement," explains SealesWinslow's Science Extension Officer, Natalie Hughes. "With the exception of potassium, plants only take up the nutrients that they need, and that may not reflect what animals require. Besides, other factors like milk production or weight gain drive the mineral demand."

The fact is you can't always rely on pasture alone to provide a complete balanced diet, which is why trace element supplementation can be a game changer when it comes to farming success. Copper, cobalt, zinc, iodine and selenium are among the who's who of minerals that are well-known for playing a

critical role in milk production, heat detection, growth rate, fertility and much more. Deficiencies manifest in poor animal health, and ultimately that has financial implications.

Of course, supplementation can take many forms. "What matters most is dosage and regularity," says Natalie. However, systems vary and the conventional approach of daily supplementation requires costly infrastructure. What's more, its success hinges on meticulous administration; in practice, this is often perceived as the Achilles heel of the system. After all, most farmers face a seemingly never-ending array of daily tasks; it's all too easy for the regular drip-feeding of minerals to fall through the cracks.

And that's where mineral blocks come to the fore. It's the peace-of-mind option that works for you, regardless of the farming system, land type or contour. It's simply a matter of placing the recommended number of the easy-to-handle tubs in the paddock. You can forget about daily dosing and supplementation and be safe in the knowledge that your animals are getting the range and level of minerals they need.

Farmers have been increasingly gravitating towards these blocks, not least because the value proposition stacks up and you can meet the mineral needs of animals without any hassles whatsoever.

The ability to deliver supplementation for different situations is one of the most

compelling benefits. "There's practically a block for everybody," remarks Natalie. "It's easy to choose a formulation that meets the precise requirements of your animals, be it young stock, animals feeding on a winter crop, cows during their dry period, or whatever. You can reliably give all animals what they need."

Take young stock, for instance. They can be easily forgotten, especially when they're out of sight – and perhaps out of mind – on a run-off block. And yet, it's exactly during this period that you can influence their growth rate with SealesWinslow's Cattle Young Stock Block. This solid performer is formulated with a unique blend of essential oils along with cobalt, iodine, selenium and zinc, specifically targeting growth during the critical post-weaning period.

Importantly, the molasses-based formulations are very palatable, ensuring that animals lick the block often enough to ingest the nutrients they need. At typical consumption rates, the blocks are a cost-effective investment. When you put a price on poor fertility, insufficient growth or lower production, the blocks soon prove themselves as value for money.

If you'd like to discuss which block is right for your situation, please contact your SealesWinslow representative or Ruralco Farm Supplies on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).



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Fertiliser for autumn-sown cereals

Regular cropping can pose quite a challenge for soil fertility. Cropping systems are often intensive operations, with high yields and little time for the land to lie fallow.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS

Large quantities of nutrients are removed when crops are harvested and most of these need to be replaced in fertiliser.

The first step in determining fertiliser requirements is soil testing. Ideally, this is carried out well before planting, to allow time for any soil fertility or pH adjustments to be made. Regular soil testing allows trends to be identified, so that falling nutrient levels can be addressed before they start to have a serious impact on productivity.

The optimum soil test values for phosphorus, sulphur, potassium and magnesium depend on the crop being grown, the anticipated yield and the crop that will follow. For instance, a wheat crop only requires an Olsen P of 15, but higher levels are generally maintained to allow for the following crop. If the next crop is grass or clover seed, the Olsen P should be in the 15–20 range; however, if the next crop was barley or a vegetable seed crop, an Olsen P of 20–25 would be recommended. There is no evidence that raising the Olsen P above 15 will result in yield increases in wheat, but the higher levels are beneficial for subsequent crops.

Should Olsen P levels be below 15, fertiliser phosphorus should be placed close to the wheat seed at planting. A soluble form of phosphate is best, e.g. Serpentine Super. Otherwise, phosphate fertiliser can simply be broadcast and surface

incorporated before planting. In this case, Superten or a similar superphosphate-based fertiliser can be used.

For wheat, sulphate sulphur levels need to be between 10 and 15. There are two main strategies for addressing sulphur requirements for autumn-sown crops. One is to apply a combination of elemental and sulphate sulphur at planting (for example, using a product such as Sulphurgain 15S or Sulphurgain 20S). The alternative is to apply sulphate sulphur at planting (e.g. as Superten) and to follow up with a second application of sulphate sulphur in spring if the winter is wet.

Two other important nutrients that need to be considered are potassium and magnesium. 'People can forget how much potassium is removed in grain and straw,' says Aimee Robinson, Ballance Science Extension Officer. Potassium plays an important role in plant structure – it delivers both strength to the straw and also impacts flowering quality.

If straw is being removed, rather than reincorporated, then there will be more need for fertiliser potassium to be applied. The optimum range for wheat crops is Quick Test 6–10. Replacing the potassium removed in a crop will take 25–70 kg K/ha/year if straw is reincorporated, or 60–190 kg K/ha/year if the straw is removed—these numbers are influenced by yield and initial soil fertility. In the

majority of cases, an application of 30–60 kg K/ha/year will be sufficient.

'It's fine to apply potassium in autumn,' says Aimee. 'You can leave it till spring, if you prefer, but that's a busy time for most people and there's risk that potassium will be forgotten. By putting it on now, you've saved yourself one more job.'

Although magnesium deficiency is rare in cereals, levels are falling on some farms. For wheat, Quick Test magnesium levels need to be 8–10, and yield responses have been shown when levels are below 10. If magnesium is required, it's normally applied at 20–30 kg Mg/ha. A product such as Serpentine Super 7K could be used; this will supply phosphate, sulphur, magnesium and potassium.

Autumn-sown cereals generally don't require applications of nitrogen at sowing, but they will need some in spring, when growth takes off. Ballance research at Temuka has shown that, where soil nitrogen levels are low, yield gains in wheat are possible if SustaiN is used for this nitrogen application, rather than urea. Using SustaiN reduces nitrogen loss through volatilisation, meaning more is retained in the soil where it can be used by plants.

For more information on fertilisers for autumn-sown cereal crops, contact Ruralco Seed on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) or talk with your local Ballance Nutrient Specialist.

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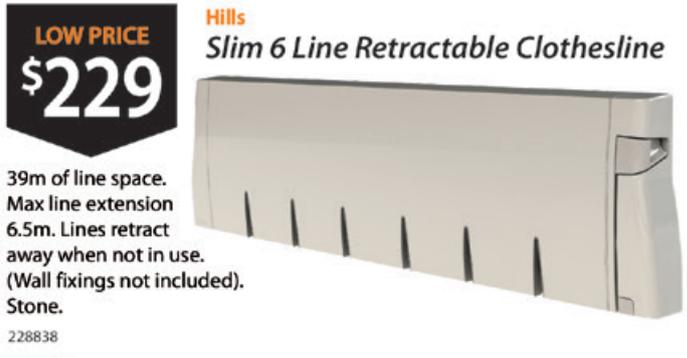


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‘Check It’ app launches to ensure irrigation efficiency

Everyone working in the rural sector knows that efficiency increases production and profitability. That’s why Irrigation NZ has developed the ‘Check It—Bucket test’ app.

WORDS AND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY IRRIGATION NZ

The app has been undergoing a rigorous testing phase for the past few months to ensure it is market-ready for a wide range of irrigation methods, farm environments and user capability.

“When the app is released I need to be 100% confident that it will provide a positive user experience from day one” said app developer and Irrigation NZ National Projects Manager, Steve Breneger. “The app will become the one tool irrigators need to check efficiency so we’ve been out in the field for months, testing it to make sure it’s intuitive, accurate, practical to operate and simple to understand.”

The Bucket test app tests how much and how evenly irrigation systems are applying water. It walks users through an annual performance assessment, provides the results instantly to their phone and e-mails a report to them. For farmers undertaking bucket tests as part

of their Farm Environment Plans, this app will provide a consistent, proven method to measure how well their irrigator is performing.

“Our goal was to create the most robust, yet simple way of doing a bucket test. We’ve aimed it at farmers and it’s designed to look at the irrigator itself, not anything beyond it. It assesses the accuracy of the wetted footprint and gives farmers a quick and easy indication if there are any problems with their application” said Steve.

Designed by Irrigation NZ, in conjunction with specialist agricultural technology provider Regen (with the support of AGMARDT) the app tests how much and how evenly irrigation systems are applying water.

The app is available for download free of charge at the Irrigation NZ website www.irrigationnz.co.nz and Regen website www.nzregen.co.nz.

What is a Bucket Test?

A bucket test gauges how much and how evenly water is being applied and for some irrigation systems calculates the instantaneous application rate. A series of buckets are set out in a line under the irrigator in front of the wetted length so samples can be taken. For drip micro irrigation, individual sprinklers or emitters are tested. The wetted length is the area over which an individual sprinkler applies water at any given time. The bucket test is a very simple way of understanding if you have a problem without any prior knowledge of complex hydraulics and pressure.

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Getting it ‘just right’

Sometimes good ideas crop up in strange places. An example is folk tales or children’s stories which usually have a moral to them. One that has entered our language is the idea of a “Goldilocks scale” where you can have too much or too little, the trick being to get it “just right”.

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND GENETICS



In animal breeding we often select for improvement by applying selection pressure to change a trait from an undesirable level of performance. Modern selection tools are very powerful and can deliver change easily. However, we shouldn’t confuse change with improvement. In some ram breeding flocks and bull breeding herds we are beginning to see some traits approach an intermediate optimum, the so-called Goldilocks zone. Examples include fatness, litter size – in sheep, adult size, or muscularity. It can be argued that for each of these traits in a given farming situation and carcass meat market, you can have too much or too little, there being a zone in the middle that is just right.

Some traits are always good to have more of, such as lamb survival and healthiness or growth rate in the young animal. So you may have some traits in the Goldilocks zone or approaching it, but want to change other traits to get improvement. Think about what you are wanting as genetic improvement and talk to your breeder to target this. Genetics is not the only solution and neither can it solve non-genetic problems. Management,

often in the form of feeding, can modify performance and will often have a greater impact. However, inherent genetic merit is hard to beat as a starting point. About 20–30 years ago everyone was flushing ewes to lift lambing percentages—today some farmers have much improved genotypes that don’t need flushing because of their inherent genetic merit for litter size.

Goldilocks traits present a challenge to applied geneticists. If a trait does not need improving, it is more complicated to define the breeding objective to hold the trait(s) concerned while continuing to improve, through change, other traits. What we have got now is indices for breeding objectives focused on change. As we approach optimums we want to take our foot off the gas pedal for such traits. We need new index systems of combined genetic merit that include traits we want to change and traits we want to hold. Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics see this as a key need for our ram and bull breeding industry.

A final point to consider is that different farms have different breeding objectives, depending

on the level of genetic merit of the flock or herd, the performance this is delivering, and goals for future performance. So a trait may be at the optimum level of genetic merit for one farm, flock or herd, but not for another. For example, one flock may not want to lift the genetic merit for the number of lambs born (NLB) based on the lambing percentages they are getting. But a ram with a high breeding value (BV) for NLB may be just what is needed by a different ram buyer with lower genetic merit for NLB in their ewe flock. The high NLB BV ram can “jump start” things for the second buyer, since half of his genetic merit that is passed on will be of great benefit for a flock with lower merit for NLB and the goal of significantly lifting performance for this trait.

Ram and bull breeders in NZ value feedback from their clients on these issues. If you think a trait is where you want it and no further change is needed, tell your breeder so they can help choose the animals you next buy to do this while continuing to improve other traits. Make it clear to your breeder which traits you want further improvement in, through genetic change.



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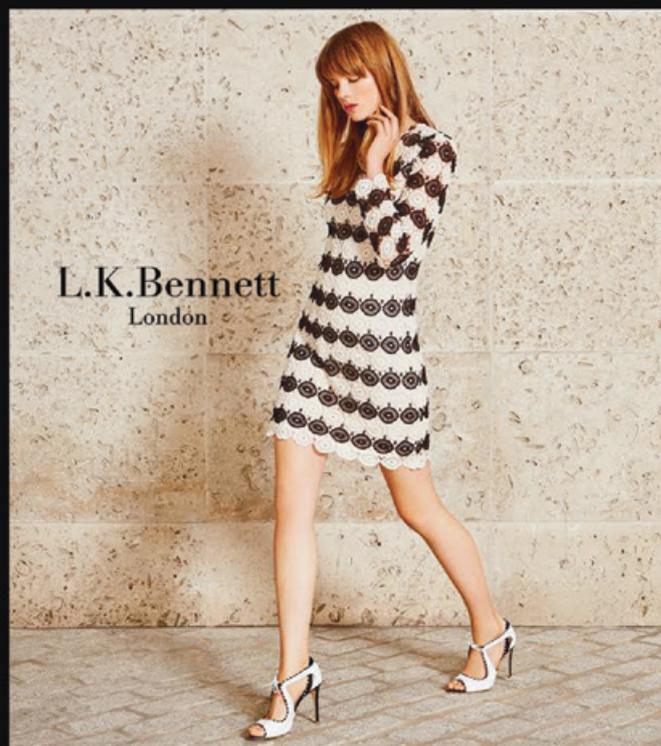
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Focus on the Health, rather than Safety

WORDS BY JANE FOWLES, COMPLIANCE PARTNERS, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY SAFER FARMS



What is Health Monitoring?

Put simply, Health Monitoring means keeping a check on your workers' health to identify any changes because of exposure to certain hazards from doing their everyday work. It also aims to detect early signs of ill health or disease (i.e. diabetes). While health monitoring is important, it is not a replacement for controls to minimise the risk of hazards.

Health Monitoring can include lung function tests, hearing tests, vision checks, blood tests and drug and alcohol testing. It can also be useful to include other wellness checks around blood pressure, BMI, cholesterol and glucose. All Health Monitoring must be carried out, or supervised by a Doctor/Registered Nurse or Nurse Practitioner with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience in Health Monitoring. Workers must be consulted about the testing to be carried out and sign a consent prior.

A typical health monitoring regime would involve:

- Identifying all the environmental hazards workers may face;
- Sending workers for a 'baseline' medical test within three months of them starting work. This can also include other checks—for example physical functionality;
- An annual health check to see if exposure is worsening their health.

What are Wellness initiatives?

This is the other part of 'health' Workplace Wellness initiatives aim to improve the health

of workers by encouraging healthy habits, which can prevent, or lower the risk, of serious health conditions developing. This can include improved nutrition, smoking cessation and increased physical activity. Wellness initiatives are linked to greater productivity, less absenteeism and fewer sick days for the employer and increased self-confidence and overall life satisfaction for workers.

Do we have to do it?

Health Monitoring is now a requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and General Risk and Workplace Management Regulations 2016. This requirement is part of your duty of care as a PCBU—to monitor worker health as far as is reasonably practicable if exposure to a health risk warrants it. The results are an important step to assessing whether the controls you have put in place are managing the risk effectively.

Remember—all employees must be fit for work. Unfit employees can be unsafe.

What does it mean for your farm?

Farm workers are exposed to several environmental hazards that can affect their health as part of their everyday work. These include:

- Dust – from animals, dirt or manure
- Exhaust emissions
- Agrichemicals
- Noise—tractors, machines
- Vibration—hands, arms and whole body
- Ultra-violet radiation—sun exposure

- Stress, fatigue, lack of sleep, alcohol and drug use—all of which can lead to physical, mental or emotional harm.

As much as we try, it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate these hazards. For the majority of these we usually provide our workers with safety gear. This means that we need to consider the requirement to monitor our workers' health.

Take a common-sense approach—think about whether the situation is potentially harmful and ask workers their opinion.

What would monitoring look like for a farm worker? It could include lung function tests to see what effect spraying agrichemicals is having, hearing checks if the worker is using an open cab tractor or random drug testing. Remember, you will need to base line test within the first three months of the worker starting and then annually.

Ensure your workers are fit for work – that is they can physically, and mentally, perform the tasks that you are assigning to them competently and safely. Fitness can be affected by fatigue, dehydration, emotional issues and mental wellness. Know the signs of when one of your workers isn't their usual self. Recognise when something compromises a workers' ability to work safely and do something about it.

For more information on anything health and safety or to discuss your on-farm health monitoring contact Jane Fowles, Compliance Partners on 021 942 150.

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Cloud storage basics

Cloud storage is one of the services available through cloud computing. It stands alongside other important cloud offerings such as email, backups, banking, or cloud apps. WORDS SUPPLIED BY COMPUTING SOLUTIONS

There are a variety of different cloud storage systems available, usually divided according to the type of files they handle. Some cloud storage systems store only a specific kind of files, such as videos, pictures, web e-mails, or documents. On the other hand, many others store virtually any type of digital files.

By their capacity, cloud storage systems can be divided into small, which usually work with the needs of average Internet users (non-organisations), and large, which deal almost exclusively with businesses that have to store millions of files. While the former are housed within a data centre that contains maybe a dozen computers, the latter can require a network of data centres, each housed in a building the size of a warehouse.

A cloud storage system requires at least one data centre connected to the web to store the files sent by a computer user using the cloud storage service. To retrieve the files, they have sent, clients access the data server online, usually through a dedicated web interface.

Data ownership

Ever since cloud storage has become increasingly used, a debate has raged over who owns the files stored in a cloud storage system. Is it the original uploader? Is it the storage company who owns the hardware that stores the data? What should a

storage company do when a business dissolves, leaving behind the uploaded files? Delete them? Keep them? If keep them, for how long? There are simply no straightforward answers to any of these questions. So, each cloud storage provider has its own policies.

Redundancy

A cloud storage system normally comprises many data servers. The computers that make the data servers sometimes require maintenance, so storage providers tend to store client's information on several machines, to ensure that clients can access their data at all times. This is known as redundancy.

Space

Businesses that use cloud storage don't have to worry about storage space – the provider of the service handles this for them. Because of this, companies backup their critical data through cloud storage in order to protect themselves from disasters. Whenever the company's computer system or software fails for any reasons, and the data necessary for running the business is damaged, the company can assure businesses that there is a backup copy that can be quickly accessed, from anywhere and at any time.

Backup

Cloud storage is not a backup solution it is just a copy of your data in another place that is often

connected or synchronised to your device, if any one of your devices connected to the cloud storage gets infected with say cryptolocker then the virus will encrypt those files too.

Security question, check

Try your best to avoid security questions to which your answers can be found just by taking one glance online, for instance, on your Facebook profile. Best way to go about this is to choose a question and answer it with another question's answer. For instance, if you choose the question where did you live as a kid, answer with 'yellow'.

Two step authentication

Instead of just username and password as your authentication, add a second step using a unique code which is available through a text message to your phone at the time of log in.

Passwords

Have a robust password for your online data, it is online and accessible from any internet connected device, having your data this available means it needs protection and your password is it, get serious and make it a good one.

Be careful where you log in

Many times we end up logging in from devices other than our own and of course we tend to forget that these other devices may be saving our information via web browsers.



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Early detection & management key to pink eye prevention

Summertime can present several significant animal health issues which can be easily managed and prevented with good animal health programs and advice.

WORDS BY IAN HODGE BVSC., MANZCVS, GENERAL MANAGER TECHNICAL SERVICES, VETERINARY ENTERPRISES GROUP

Commonly we see pinkeye in sheep and cattle during summer. Stalky grass, dust, flies and higher stocking rates all play a role. Pinkeye is easily treated if detected early. Keep an eye out when you are handling stock: the effected eyes are a pink-red colour and cloudy on the surface of the eye.

Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency can also become significant during summer with changes in the quality and quantity of the diet. The disease process is complicated, but ultimately the effect of low levels of thiamine results in swelling of the brain which in turn gives rise to nervous signs such as star gazing, seizures and head pressing. Death is common if the disease is not treated quickly and adequately.

Yersiniosis can be seen in calves after weaning. Affected animals develop diarrhoea with blood clots and become very ill thrifty. Often there are thirty or forty affected animals in a mob. Yersiniosis is seen in calves under stress of some sort and in those that didn't receive adequate colostrum. Rapidly changing diets can also contribute.

Parasites in sheep, beef and dairy cattle remain ever present, and summer is a period of the year when environmental conditions suit rapid larval development on pasture and rapid re-infection of animals. In many cases drench intervals may need to be adjusted. It is very important that you are using the correct product in the correct way. If you don't know whether or not you have drench resistance on the farm you should start an investigation process to ascertain if and what type of drench resistance you are dealing with. Using drenches responsibly and appropriately is very important. Photo sensitization can become a problem during summer. Young ruminants may not be able to adequately metabolise chlorophyll (green grass pigments) for various reasons. Photodynamic agents build up in the skin to cause the photosensitive dermatitis seen as skin crusting and infection particularly on unpigmented areas like white hair, the face and muzzle. Treatment involves covering the area if possible with an animal cover, reducing chlorophyll (grass) intake, dietary supplementation, antibacterial and sun blocking creams and liver support.

Vaccinations are a critical part of animal disease management and antibiotic usage reduction. Calves may need to have boosters for clostridial disease and leptospirosis, and beef cattle may need to have a broad spectrum clostridial vaccination regime especially if they are on high protein diets. Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) vaccination of calves, heifers, cows and bulls is a very good idea.

Leptospirosis presents special significance because it is directly transmissible to humans where it has the potential to be fatal. All stock, (beef, dairy, deer and sheep) can be vaccinated against Leptospirosis. Workplace safety regulations are becoming increasingly stringent in this area because of the risk to human health. Discussing animal health management with your veterinarian will result in the prevention of many potentially serious summer problems. A summer animal health program, when designed properly, will result in continued growth progress, reduced use of antibiotics and optimum health in your animals which in turn grows wealth and farming satisfaction.

Co-op News

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Change in discount for VTNZ

VTNZ have recently had a change in discount for Ruralco Cardholders, you now get 10% discount on WOF and there is no discount on COF, check out the VTNZ locations nationwide at www.ruralco.co.nz.

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Christmas event in Ashburton again a huge success

Ruralco held its annual Christmas Event in Ashburton on Thursday 1 December 2016. This year's Christmas event was again a great success with an increase in sales and more people in Ashburton for this event than ever before. Participating businesses were open late till 9pm and provided exceptional specials and super discounts including Mobil Ashburton who had 25¢ per litre off fuel with the Ruralco Card for the whole day and saw the best day ever in terms of transactions for their business.

We also ran a competition over the day of the event, if cardholders shopped at five or more participating businesses they went into the draw to win one out of three hampers with goods kindly donated by participating businesses. The winner of the wheelbarrow was Lynette Thomson, and the tubs went to Suzy King and Michael & Sandy Douglas.



Lynette Thomson with Group CEO Rob Sharkie



Michael Douglas



Suzy King

Entries open for United Wheat Growers annual competition

United Wheat Growers, with the support of Ruralco Seed, are once again holding their annual wheat growing competition in 2017. Entries close 31 May 2017, so remember to get your entries in quick. Entry details are on the Ruralco website at www.ruralco.co.nz, www.uwg.co.nz or for more information email George Walker at george.walker@ruralco.co.nz

Sort your autumn seed requirements now

February is a good time to talk to Ruralco Seed about your pasture seed options and to seek advice on what to sow now. It is also a good time to look at short-term ryegrass options for growing quick feed and to sow forage cereals. To secure your seed supplies at great early season prices, contact the Ruralco Seed team today.

Upcoming events

Join us at these events and keep an eye out for the great fuel deals on offer

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11 March

Wanaka A&P Show

10–11 March

Methven A&P Show

18 March

South Island Agricultural Field Days in Kirwee

29–31 March

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