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ON THE COVER:
Rennae, Daryl and
Karen Trafford from
Wangapeka Dairy
and Cheeses

Cheese-making: first by chance, now by choice



A chance brush with cheese making has led to a growing family business for Nelson farming couple Daryl and Karen Trafford. BY KATE TAYLOR

The picturesque Kahurangi National Park is the backdrop for Wangapeka Downs—home to Wangapeka Family Dairy and where Wangapeka cheeses are created.

A few years ago, Karen was asked to provide fresh milk for a cheese-making course. The enthusiastic comments on the flavour and quality of the milk and the interest in the farming practices that resulted in such a superior product, spurred Karen and Daryl to move in a new direction after milking cows for 22 years.

With the goal of developing a holistic farm-to-market dairy business, they say the key to success is being hands on with everything from pasture to finished product.

When they moved to Nelson in 2000, they converted a 800ha Tapawera farm to dairy but sold it in 2008 to buy a sheep and beef property. They are now on a 190ha property at The Tui.

"When we sold the dairy cows I kept about six of them and milked them in a little portable shed," says Karen. She was asked to supply some milk for the cheese-making course and the rest, as they say, is history. She was fascinated about the process.

"That's where it all started. There was demand for our milk for cheese making and my own passion grew from there. It was a good way to start too. I like the traditional way things are produced. I was basically supplying back into local domestic market. People knew where the milk came from, where it originated from."

She says they enjoy the challenge of being self-contained and sustainable instead of corporate and production-driven.

"Our passion has been to recreate what used to happen 50 years ago... buying your bacon from the local butcher knowing it was from the farm down the road. You knew what you were eating. The way we eat today is so different. The way we farm is so different. The challenge is to see



whether or not we have to be bigger and more production driven to make a living," Karen says.

"We are passionate about where food comes from, how it is produced and that it's good for you. We're passionate about food and health and animal welfare. That's why we're doing what we're doing. We want to know if it will work. Life's a bit of a treadmill but the main challenge is to be diverse and look for alternative markets. Can we stay small, supply our own domestic market and be sustainable? There are lots of questions and answers to come yet."

She says their holistic approach gave her both an opportunity and a point of difference with a small number of cows. The cheese business started with a little 100-year-old cottage converted into a small factory utilising a three bale cow shed and milking plants with cream cans.

The business has adapted as it has grown. "The cow numbers had built up to 30 and I was still there until about 11 o'clock, which wasn't really good enough. So we built a little five-bale cow shed, added everything that was needed for compliance and everything grew from there."

Karen says her expertise grew as the business grew. "There's a lot of knowledge you have to obtain to do this correctly," she says.

ABOVE: Rennae, Daryl and Karen Trafford in their cheese room
LEFT: The key to success is being hands on with everything from pasture to finished product
BELOW: The A2 Jersey and Friesian-cross cows in the Trafford's herd are carefully chosen for the quality of their milk

She had to create a food safety programme and a risk management programme.

"Every farm that supplies Fonterra has one of them, but because I'm different I had to have one of my own. It takes the same compliance to do this on a small scale—the laws are no different to size or scale. We also had to be audited every year, so I went away to AsureQuality courses and did food safety and pasteurisation courses. There was a good two years' worth of training to gain understanding before we grew again."

However, it didn't take long for the business to outgrow the little old cottage. The farm was sold in 2013 and the current 190ha farm was bought in The Tui. A purpose-built factory was being installed as Karen and Daryl moved onto the property.

"It had a 16-aside herringbone shed on it that hadn't been used for about 10 years so we recommissioned it and put in new plant and launched Wangapeka Cheese our first year here." The factory was built close to the shed.

"We wanted it so when the cows were milked, the milk went straight into the factory and into the pasteurisation process with a new 500-litre vat. As soon as we finished working in the shed, the milk was ready and waiting for cheese production."

Karen concentrates on cheese-making on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Although timetables can change, milk is bottled on Mondays and Thursdays for local supermarkets.

"Our main philosophy is farm fresh milk. We don't standardise it. It comes from the shed, is pasteurised and put into the bottle as nature intended it... with cream on the top and it does vary a little in composition.

"We can have a week of rain and the milk will be different. It's seasonal. Winter milk is a lot creamier than in summer. We milk once a day through





ABOVE: The Traffords' home farm where they concentrate on building soil health and enriching pastures

LEFT: The business is family run, from left: Ryan Trafford, Father Daryl, Rhi Cairns (Ryan's Partner), Karen Trafford, and Cody McLellan a cousin of the family

BELOW: The Traffords have help on the farm with experienced herdsman Neil Elson who comes from an organic farm in England

winter and twice a day in the height of summer. The milk alters naturally... not terribly much but it does change."

The weekend's milk is cultured for a kefir—fermented milk with probiotic—and Greek yoghurt, as well as "all sorts of other things," laughs Karen. "In summer time we also do cream products including clotted cream, double cream and pouring cream."

Fewer cows are milked through the winter—25 to 30 compared with 65 to 70 in summer.

"We will have to increase those numbers coming into the new season to meet demand for products. It's a good position to be in."

Daryl says letting people know their story is part of the business. "We've concentrated on building soil health and enriching our pastures, incorporating a herbal lay that includes species such as chicory, plantain, red and white clover, yarrow and dandelion. All our fertilisers are natural rock—no phosphates or nitrates—and we avoid herbicides and pesticides."

He says the A2 Jersey and Friesian-cross cows in their herd are carefully chosen for the quality of their milk.

"Their health and welfare are our number-one concern. Natural supplements and remedies keep them healthy and boost their immunity, and antibiotics and drenches aren't used unless the animal's welfare is at risk. Our two herds—summer and winter—are milked once a day, not twice, which reduces stress on the cows. Calves are left longer than usual with their mothers, so they too are healthier and happier. Our holistic

approach means contented, robust, disease-resistant animals producing top-quality milk."

The couple had one year on their own with the herd and then employed experienced English herdsman Neil Elson, who used to work for an organic farm supplying raw milk around London.

The farm is looking at the beef-aspect of their progeny as well as the quality milk of the cows.

"The cheese side is sorted so now we're working on farm revenue," Daryl says.

"We had been winter grazing for dairy farmers until we built up beef numbers. The plan is to buy in AI genetics and rear all our own calves. We wanted to add value to the male progeny so we didn't have to bobby it," he says. They imported Normande semen, a French breed, with the first crop of calves now on the ground.

"It is more of a beefy, heavier breed but it is also important that the female is good for milking. At the moment there's nothing wrong with the cows but for us the value is in the offspring. Looking at what has landed on the ground so far this year the Normande bulls are really beefy and look like they're going to be really good."

The aim is for those Normande male offspring to be 100kg live weight by mid/end of November, keeping some through another 18–20 months to 200kg carcass weight.

"We're looking to create a small but viable beef unit with male offspring fattened as steers or bulls with females moving into the dairy herd. We will consolidate the cheese business for another year to help figure out what proportions are best for the farm to best utilise both sides of the operation."

Karen adds they have been breeding the type of cow that supplies the right milk for the cheese making.

"We're into our own progeny now and we've bred out all of the mastitis. We've kept the stronger progeny and they're yielding really high which is important for cheese making. They're purpose bred, I guess. What we have in our herd really suits our business and we like a smaller cow with nice quality of milk. That is the whole point of breeding—quality not production. We're really focused on that... lots of protein."

The business employs seven people, four of them full time. Daughter Rennae, 26, is taking responsibility for marketing and product development (among other things) and son Ryan, 24, runs the shop, the market and milk delivery. He has recently returned from working with strawberries in Brisbane's horticultural industry.

"To have our two children now in the business is great and allows me to dream in the future of being an ambassador for the company," says Karen.

"It will soon be the turn of the younger generation to drive it further. They are ambitious and have more energy. We already have a modern approach to our product with full barcoding and full traceability. But they have a lot to offer and who knows what the future will bring."



Wangapeka has a presence at the Farmers Market at Fashion Island in Nelson on Wednesdays, at Montgomery Square in Nelson on a Saturday morning and the Motueka Market on a Sunday. The company has an online presence at www.wangapeka.com and a shop in the Grape Escape Complex in Hope.

"Nelson has an alternative or creative approach to food and it suits us. It was a lovely place for us to get something like this started," Karen says.

They have extended the product range down in Christchurch into Fresh Choice supermarkets and other wholesale shops. "A little bit also goes to cheese mongers and some health or whole food stores in Auckland."

Karen says Nelson is a beautiful place but one they haven't really had a chance to enjoy because they have been so focused on getting their business viable and learning everything there was to know. "It has been self-absorbing, the past three years at least. We'll look up from our work soon and be able to appreciate all the hard work."

A country of great milk and great cheese

New Zealand produces excellent milk and that's one of the reasons it can also produce excellent cheese, says cheese maker Karen Trafford.

"If you start with really good milk, you should have a really good end product," she says.

"New Zealand on a whole can produce excellent cheese. We used to have lots of cheese factories—I grew up in Taupo and there was one at Reporoa. Dad was a stock buyer and he used to call in and buy big blocks of cheese to bring home. That has been lost. Now the country as a whole exports 98% of its milk."

She says artisan cheese makers take a more traditional approach than factories.

For the past two years she has had the help of French cheese maker Francis Bigot and this year she has been joined by Italian Sylvia Ferriti.

"Having access to the knowledge and experience of two European cheese makers, both highly qualified, has really upskilled us. It's a lot harder for us to get to Europe and we have learnt so much. Their adjustment was learning to work with our milk but Sylvia in particular can't believe how much our milk does yield."

She says Francis had a background in food technology, while Sylvia milked sheep in the mountains and made cheese every day.

The product line of Wangapeka Family Dairy is diverse including soft, hard and fresh cheeses, greek yoghurt, milk and cream.

The soft cheeses are brie and camembert.

Named for the plants, birds and landmarks around Wangapeka Downs, some of their hard and semi-hard cheeses are enhanced with natural flavours—Blue Rock, the peppery Horopito, Kakariki with a vein of nettle, the Swiss-type Kinzett Creek, cumin-flavoured Ricketts Road and the mild Tadmor Valley and Tui.

"Our hard and semi-hard cheeses have a lower moisture content and higher fat content than our soft and fresh cheeses. All these cheeses have been aged anywhere from six weeks to two years and they continue to age in their packaging."

The fresh cheeses are Italian mozzarella, Middle Eastern halloumi, quark (a soft, white cheese made the tradition way by straining soured whole milk through a cheese cloth) and a range of feta including chilli, cracked pepper and saffron, cumin and mint. These are the simplest, mildest cheeses, made with minimal processing and no ageing.

Crems include pouring, clotted and double. As well as whole milk and butter milk, Wangapeka offers kefir, which is known as the "the champagne of milk". It is a probiotic fermented milk drink made with kefir grains. "Silky in texture with a tangy flavour and refreshing mild effervescence, it can be drunk as is, made into a smoothie or used in cooking," Karen says.

She says their milk could not be fresher, as it is pumped straight from the cows to the dairy, where it's pasteurised and bottled within four hours of milking.

"Wangapeka milk is completely natural—just as it comes. It's not standardised, so there may be subtle differences from bottle to bottle. These reflect the season, the weather, the composition of the pasture and many other factors," she says.

"Minimal processing means that our milk, cream and cheeses are as close to real as they can be. Our whole milk is rich and creamy, yoghurts are deliciously full-bodied and our cheeses have a depth of flavour and texture that signifies that they're handmade.

"We have something to bring back to the New Zealand market in an unhampered product, no sugars or thickeners, a very natural approach."

BELOW: Having access to the knowledge and experience of European cheese makers has upskilled the Traffords. With Italian cheese maker Sylvia Ferriti (top left) and Debbie Wagner (right).





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Adversity pushing innovation & new opportunities

The cyclic nature of all agricultural sectors means there will always be times of both optimism and adversity. NEAL SHAW, GROUP CEO

While there is currently significant focus on dairying returns, most of us have been around long enough to know these difficult times are part of a much bigger picture. There's no denying it's tough-going for many, but in days-gone-by, times of adversity have also seen opportunities and innovation realised.

New Zealand's geographic isolation has never been a barrier to export opportunities. Even during the early 1800s, Maori sold grain and potatoes to New South Wales, and European settlers exported whale and seal oil and skins. Farming evolved as the country was colonised and wool quickly became the main export until the New Zealand development of refrigerated shipments in the 1880s. This opened the door to a raft of additional export opportunities, including meat, cheese and butter.

This innovation was only one of many developed by New Zealand's agricultural community—pioneering aerial top-dressing, electric fencing and the herringbone milking shed all increased farming productivity.

Even when international markets changed, thanks to oil shortages, the development of man-made fibres, or long-standing customers, such as Britain, joining the EEC, our agriculture sector has continued to find other ways to secure markets and keep farming profitable. New Zealand has been reasonably agile at responding to how and what we export, despite being at the vagaries of other country's regulatory and political climates. We now see many products leave our shores more processed than ever before to meet our global customers' needs. Gone are the days when exports were solely volume based. Nowadays as a nation, we are adept to finding niche markets for quality and unique products. It is clear that scale does not necessarily add value.

This has been particularly evident in the meat, dairy and wool sectors. Meat cuts are produced and packaged to meet the many varied international palates; milk goods can be powdered or long-life; butter and cheeses come in a multitude of products; and wool often finds its way onto the fashion catwalks instead in traditional flooring.

Part of the key to this success is knowing your customer and understanding what influences their buying. Whether you are farming or you run a different business, understanding your customer will allow you to effectively adapt and meet changing needs, add value and ultimately grow your market.

In challenging and tough economic times, it may be tempting to reduce costs by cutting back on staff numbers, but given the level of expertise which will also be lost it is likely to be only a short term strategy.

Staff are a key asset in a business, as they are often the ones interfacing with customers and they will have a positive influence on what is produced. They are very important to Ruralco in that they know and understand both of our customers—our cardholders and our suppliers.

Ruralco continually looks to increase its supplier business through our network and database of customers and in return, suppliers give discounts to our cardholders. Ruralco provides marketing support to grow our suppliers' business which makes their business, and ours, more sustainable.

The Ruralco Cardholder has the convenience of the supplier network, the meaningful discounts offered and a centralised billing system. Cardholders are also part of a community which collectively works to lower farm input costs. This is mutually beneficial for the cardholder and the supplier.

Our job is to facilitate those transactions. Having that clarity of purpose is key to operating efficiently and in a more targeted way.

Ruralco makes a point of knowing its customers. Many readers will have been contacted by a Customer Service team member updating our database to ensure we have the right information so we can bring you the offers relevant to your specific farming operation. We negotiate deals on your behalf and if we know who we are representing individually and collectively, then we will be able to do this well.

This approach is vital when it comes to negotiating in tough times. Understanding and being able to respond and adapt to your customer's and market's needs, is key to realising opportunities when they arise. Informed decisions which come from listening to your staff and customers will ensure you don't jump on an unprofitable band-wagon, and instead grow your business in a sustainable and profitable way.

BELOW: Neal Shaw, Group CEO



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Dairy herd reproduction planning 2015

Capturing all the potential from the upcoming reproduction season will be more important this season than ever before. ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY IAN HODGE, BVSC., MACVSC, VETENT RIVERSIDE

Getting cows in calf early means more profit for you. There is no doubt that the profitability of obtaining high six week in calf rates, minimizing the number of non-cycling cows and achieving low empty rates at the end of the mating period is very high.

The In Calf study conducted in NZ showed a \$4 return per cow for every percentage increase in six week in calf rate at a \$5.50 pay out and stocking rate of 3 cows/ha. In a 500 cow herd moving from 65-70% 6 week in calf rate this would equate to \$10,000 extra profit.

At current pay out levels this may be slightly less but higher stocking rates may compensate slightly. Achieving a six week in calf rate greater than 70% will result in a calving pattern next season where 85% of the herd are more likely to be calved by week six.

Early calving cows have more profitability because

- They have more days in milk
- They get back in calf faster
- They have lower empty rates
- They give rise to a condensed calving pattern
- They simplify calving management and heat detection, and they produce more early AB calves.

Your Dairy Vet can help you achieve high reproductive performance targets. They can provide the solutions.

My advice to you this season is to make the wise investment in the following areas:

1. Have a reproduction consultation with your dairy vet.

This meeting should take place early enough so that important issues can be discussed in good time before mating starts. This meeting should involve a discussion about the following points

- Detecting and resolving post-calving uterine infections
 - Arranging body condition scoring for the herd and heifers and addressing the issues
 - Monitoring trace minerals in heifers and cows and planning a strategy
 - Planning an approach to cycling and non-cycling cows
 - Heat detection methods and training
 - Heifer mating- planning the strategy
 - Bull purchase and bull disease management
 - Pregnancy scanning-planning the best approach
 - Mastitis management-using PureMilk
 - Whole herd disease management (Vaccinations, fat/protein ratio monitoring etc.)
 - Costs and your return on investment from interventions
2. Invest in independent body condition scoring of the whole herd, as well as any corrective measures required to obtain targets. The evidence for improved reproductive performance in cows with higher body condition scores above 4.5 is very strong.

3. Invest in testing for, and the management of, ketosis. This is a significant and very common reproduction limiting disease.
4. Invest in metrichecking and metricuring cows to detect and treat uterine infections early. Cows with uterine disease will have a low first service conception rate and a higher risk of being culled.
5. Invest in the treatment of non-cycling cows. Ideally less than 20% of the herd should be non-cycling 10 days prior to the planned start of mating. Points 2, 3 and 4 above will help reduce the numbers of non-cyclers. Ovary scanning or ovary palpating non-cycling cows when there are larger numbers may be the most cost effective approach. Using CIDR's on those cows most likely to respond to CIDR's will be prudent this season. Treat non-cycling cows early. Profit is lost by delaying the treatment of non cyclers.
6. Invest in heifers. Body condition scoring, health management and mating.
7. Know the age structure of the herd. Older cows have reduced reproductive performance.

These areas are critical to help you achieve better reproductive performance, and are the areas that will generate the highest return on investment to you.

Your vets are there to help you. They have a good understanding of the situation facing dairy farmers at this time and are aware that reducing spending in key areas is false economy. Vets strongly encourage you to engage with them to find the best solutions for your farm.

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Is your irrigation working for you?

Farmers worried their irrigators are not using precious water efficiently can have the entire system audited, from water supply to end nozzle. BY LINDA CLARKE

Richard Kingsbury, who grew up on a Mid Canterbury farm and has spent his working life in the irrigation industry, is a qualified independent consultant who can evaluate existing systems and advise or project manage new ones.

He says managing precious water allocations is a serious business and farmers need to know their systems are delivering water efficiently. What is quoted in the offering is not always what is happening in the field and this needs to be tested.

Richard set up Irrigation Evaluation Services five years ago and now helps farmers all around New Zealand. Twenty-eight years using, manufacturing, servicing and selling irrigators means he is ideally qualified. He can audit new or older irrigation systems, from centre pivots to k-lines, or draw up concept or design plans for farmers wanting new systems.

He also offers pivot contour modelling, which involves sending a drone into the air to capture an aerial view of rolling farmland then feeding the digital information into a computer programme that calculates how much earth must be moved for centre pivots to operate.

"The easy flat land is nearly all gone, now it's the rolling to more difficult land requiring irrigation. But how best to irrigate and what with is the question," Richard said.

Information from the drone helps create a 3D terrain model and the centre pivot design is placed onto the terrain model to identify all the angles and slopes that need altering to allow the pivot to rotate within the manufacturer's specifications.

Richard said earthworks can be a major consideration when factoring in the cost at the outset. The pivot contour modelling assists in quantifying how much land can be irrigated versus how many cubic metres of earth is required to be moved.

Aside from evaluations, Richard provides advice and ideas for new irrigation systems, and helps farmers compare plans and quotes, which can be confusing. "We talk about their wants, needs, and requirements for the on-farm irrigation system and document this in a scope of works. When the design and quotes are presented, I review and ensure quotes are apples for apples or as close to as possible."

He said a basic evaluation tool was the bucket test, where water was collected under irrigators and measured to give information about the uniformity of application, rate of precipitation and operating pressures of the system; this was

particularly popular for new irrigators as part of the commissioning report or sign off.

New irrigation systems on irrigation schemes like Central Plains are being bucket tested as part of farm management plans required by water supply agreements. Others were auditing systems to conform to the Matrix of Good Management.

Richard said evaluations typically found a lack of pressure at the end of centre pivot irrigators. "The other thing you find is that uniformity is not as efficient as sometimes quoted."

Farmers were frequently surprised by the evaluation findings, and there was not always an easy fix. "In some cases, it has been insufficient pressure or flow from the water source, other times it has been incorrectly designed sprinkler packages." The end result was the same: water was not being used efficiently.

"Everyone needs water. If you are not irrigating efficiently, if you are over-watering and not uniform you will wash nutrients away and need to replace them. It costs money and time. Understanding how efficient you are is the key to a good operation."

ABOVE: Richard Kingsbury has spent his working life in the irrigation industry and is now a qualified independent consultant

MAIN IMAGE: Richard travels around Canterbury to audit new or old irrigation systems.

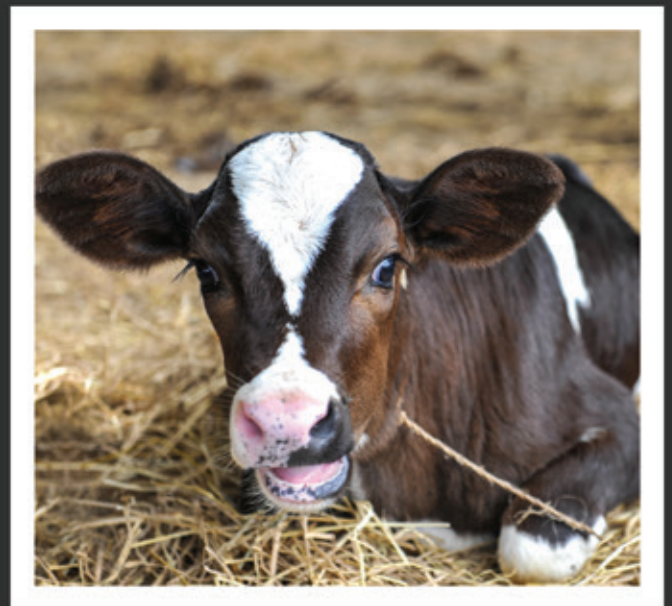


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Deep well dilemma for scheme users

As dairy farm budgets come under ultra-close scrutiny this season it has become tempting to throw some valuable drought insurance out with the other “non-essential” items being plucked off cash flow spread sheets. BY RICHARD RENNIE

That insurance is in the form of deep well irrigation pumps that appear to be no longer needed, as more farms switch over to surface irrigation schemes.

Irrigation and energy companies have been inundated in recent weeks with calls from farmers, many of them dairy operators, wanting to shut down their bore pumps and avoid paying the often considerable costs that go with maintaining an idle bore on the farm.

ATS Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon has also fielded a number of these calls, and Tracey's advice has been to think long and hard before pulling the pin on the farm's deep bore pumping ability.

“It is fair to say the pumps, even though they may not be needed under scheme operations, still sit there like a type of insurance for those dry years when the schemes cannot supply the amount required,” says Tracey.

While the amounts vary, some larger farms can expect to pay a network charge on their pumps of \$12,000 a year, even when those pumps are not operating.

“You have to take a long term view on what you are doing when you get rid of the pump. This summer is looking like it may be another dry one, coming after the last one, given the predictions for an El Nino event which tend to bring drier conditions to the east coast.”

Her concern is heightened by the lack of rainfall experienced through some parts of Canterbury over autumn-winter, meaning soil reserves have still not fully recharged after the dry period last summer. Irrigation NZ Chief Executive Andrew Curtis said he was hearing about more farmers weighing up their options on such a significant cost – particularly those in the lower Selwyn district where additional irrigation was rarer than some areas.

“One option some farmers are considering is dropping the network charge by disconnecting, and instead investing the money into a diesel powered generator set. In some cases for the money involved, the generator starts to look like a good option.”

It could be that the set can be used for both deep well water extraction, and for powering the farm dairy as a standby when the power goes off—in that sense it is an item that after past years' power losses most farmers would want to have on hand anyway. Avoiding network charges and keeping the pumps on standby are not an option after recent



changes to network companies' re-categorisation of irrigation pumps into a specific “irrigation” category.

In the past for low use irrigation pumps it was possible for EA Networks customers to place their pumps into a “general” pricing option, with considerably lower daily fixed line charges, and a higher variable rate for the few times they are used.

But as the network seeks greater visibility on specific irrigation demand potential, this option has gone for pumps with capacity exceeding 20kW. The upside is a grid that is robust and capable of handling a known level of irrigation pump demand at peak times, but the downside is having to wear the higher network charges for farmers choosing to retain their pumps as standby drought insurance.

Irrigation consultant Paul Reese said deciding whether or not to shut down a deep well bore came down to how secure farmers felt about the reliability of the scheme they were on, and what storage they had sitting within that for added security.

“You may have to decide, do I have 90–95% reliability and therefore do I require a deep bore?”

In some cases farmers opting to take up water from schemes may be required to relinquish their bore water take, depending upon zone requirements.

“The reason people go on the schemes is because they are more reliable and cheaper in the long run—for farmers further up the Plains the cost of lifting water up is fairly high.”

He suspects many farmers may leave their well pumps in place for as long as their consents run, and let that lapse once expired, and invest more in on farm storage as a back stop.

“Many will look at their scheme, and by investing more in farm storage and decide they feel pretty well covered. Having that storage is an option over having a deep bore in place.”

For more information or to discuss your irrigation needs, contact Tracey Gordon, ATS Energy Account Manager on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) today.

Mixed options and prospects for plains arable sector



Despite the rippling effect of the dairy downturn Canterbury arable farmers still have plenty of reasons to remain optimistic about their opportunities as spring planting season approaches. BY RICHARD RENNIE

While there is no denying the impact reduced dairy demand will have, indications from the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR)'s AIMI crop surveys are when winter sown crops are combined with spring sowing intentions, the total area sown in wheat or barley appears to be only down by only 3% on the total area harvested in 2015.

Meantime the volume of milling wheat harvested and stored was down only 10% on last year, with the 20,000t in storage at July 1 actually less than last year.

Even feed wheat, of which over half is sold to the dairy sector, is estimated to have been 88% sold, with the 38,000t on hand less than the year before. The story is similar with feed barley, but 18% more was estimated to have been unsold compared to the same time the year before.

FAR chief executive Nick Pyke says it is still something of a guessing game about just how great the impact of the dairy downturn will be on the arable sector, and is dependent on how long the significantly lower returns last.

Maize plantings take hit

"But feed maize is one crop that stands out for the impact the downturn is having. There is not nearly

as much going in this season as a result of payout predictions."

The AIMI Maize report supports his view. By winter this year despite harvested maize silage tonnages being very close to last year's \$1.36 million, there was still 458,000t unsold, compared to 387,000t the year before.

This spring's maize sowing intentions also reflected the significant turnaround in dairy feed patterns, with intended plantings down by 24% on the 65,000ha planted the year before.

Feedback from contractors and suppliers around the region indicate what maize that will be grown will be largely grown upon home farm blocks, with reduced herd sizes and stocking rates opening up that option.

Grain options exist

Nick Pyke says he hopes there may be more wheat and barley go in for milling purposes this spring, and the lowered feed grain prospects could provide a silver lining for the industry if more North Island millers take on more South Island grain for processing.

Given where grain prices are at present, he believes the use of local grain is now a "very viable" option.

"Any mill looking at long term viable supplies of grain would do well to consider locally grown grain in the mix. There is always a risk of relying upon imports, it has been hard to get mills in the North Island to commit to South Island grain.

"However with more inland ports developing, including the Port of Tauranga facility at Rolleston, it should be easier to get grain in, with facilities suited to it."

He is also hopeful the "mono-gastric" industry, namely pork and poultry, will also consider greater barley use, versus importing overseas crop.

"With more exporting countries focussing firmly on demand in Asia, there will be less to go around to countries like New Zealand, so a level of self sufficiency for feed would be a good thing for everyone."

He acknowledges the threat imported grains, of which over a hundred thousand tonnes of maize (corn) has been imported within the last eight months.

"But there is the real biosecurity risk there and we want to minimise that risk through MPI's procedures. At the end of the day, the cost of this grain is dictating what processors will do."

In that respect Nick takes some heart from the decline in the dollar which is making such imports more expensive, whilst sharpening the competitiveness of another promising arable sector, the vegetable seed sector.

Vege seed crop sector has more potential

Canterbury is already the source for a significant proportion of the world's carrot seed, and research is focussed on how this can be lifted across multiple vegetable crops.

"There is significant opportunity there to lift seed quality and quantity, of both herbage and vegetable seeds. However a few generic issues do present themselves which we are working hard to try and deal with through closer research and work with growers," says Nick.

He says while international seed companies would be unlikely to put all their seeds in one



basket, as it were, should yields and consistency be lifted they may be encouraged to “put a few more in.”

A key one is improving the pollination rates on crops that bees typically do not favour, including carrots and some herbage crops.

“The challenge is how to encourage pollinators other than honey bees to be actively pollinating these crops.”

The research to date has included work with bumble bees, native bees and even some fly species that require protein in their diet and can source that from pollen.

Making farms more friendly to pollinators has involved initiatives like the “Trees for Bees” project.

Educating farmers about the value of irrigation timing to avoid when bees are pollinating also plays a part.

Potatoes bring break crop opportunity

Federated Farmers arable chairman Guy Wigley said he anticipated some arable farmers may return to some traditional farming patterns as demand drops for dairy feed crops. This may include fattening lambs, and taking advantage of a strong beef schedule.

Options for farmers with irrigation infrastructure were even greater, with the opportunity to consider alternative “break” crops like potatoes as particularly appealing.

Potatoes New Zealand board director and Ashburton grower David Redmond said there was an interest among potato growers inland that had not had potatoes grown on it, that had water supply also on hand. Prospects for export

potatoes are increasingly positive, with a recent agreement signed with Vietnam to sell whole and processed potatoes.

Seed potato growers in particular require land that is free of any fungal or soil borne diseases, and will also be free of any volunteer varieties of potatoes that can affect the purity of the seed crop grown.

ATS Seed general manager Tim Dale said he was also seeing a shift in sowing intentions for this spring. That included greater interest on both potatoes and peas.

“Peas don’t always fit in everyone’s rotation, but prices seem to have held up reasonably well compared to grains.”

In his latest ATS grain report Tim notes that grain contracts for 2016 remain quiet with buyers taking a “wait and see” approach on feed barley deals in particular.

He said despite nervousness around dairy feed commitment there was still strong interest in fodder beet, either from dairy farmers committing milking block land to it, or to dairy support operators who were enjoying the good yields a well-managed crop could deliver.

“But it is maize that is taking the greatest hit in terms of plantings. Contract growers are keen to plant it, but are struggling to get a commitment from dairy farmers on it for delivery.”

Massive grain imports influx

A greater threat to maize grain growers may also yet come from further afield. An area of contention within the arable industry has been the sheer volume of imported maize grain being imported from Europe and the United States.

ABOVE: Nick Pyke, FAR Chief Executive

IMAGES FROM LEFT: Maize, wheat, carrots, peas, potatoes

For the first quarter of this year alone, over 120,000t of maize grain was imported, including 37,000t from Bulgaria, hit by the Russian ban on European imports. This is a significant quantity against NZ’s total domestic grown maize grain crop of 230,000t.

The sheer volume of imports has kept prices below economic for hard pressed NZ growers, and also raised the spectre of biosecurity risks accompanying the high volume imports.

An importation of maize grain in March contained significant volumes of a banned weed seed Noogoora Burr which is extremely difficult to eliminate from maize crops.

Here in Canterbury the industry still remains vigilant for any signs of black grass seed which blew off the back of a truck while being transported to a seed dressing facility near Ashburton last spring.

The herbicide resistant, invasive weed competes strongly with cultivated crops, and has the potential to decimate commercial grain yields.

Nick Pyke says that regardless of dairy payout prospects, communication and co-operation between the dairy and arable sectors is greater than ever.

Earlier concerns over disjointed or inaccurate signals on grain pricing have been resolved through the regular AIMI report and the Profarmer fortnightly report.

“We hear about bad transactions a lot less often compared to four years ago and transactions are not as problematic as they used to be.”



Flexible quality feed: Sovereign kale and Spitfire rape

Sovereign kale and Spitfire rape are both continuing to show their strengths in the brassica market. ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY AGRICOM

Farmers are pleased with the high yields and ease of management from both, and this has contributed to the popularity and reason people consistently choose Sovereign and Spitfire.

Sovereign kale is an integral part of many winter grazing systems and cropping rotations whereas rapes have traditionally been used as summer single-graze finishing crops for lambs while newer multi-purpose forage rapes, such as Spitfire (a cross between a rape and kale), allow greater flexibility with sowing dates as well as yield potential and suitability to a range of stock classes.

Sovereign is one of the latest flowering kales on the market. This means it can be grazed into early spring with few concerns. When kales mature their stem lignifies from the ground up in order to ensure that the stem is strong enough to hold the seed head. Sovereign, being late flowering, matures later than most other kales therefore stem lignification starts later, resulting in stem quality holding longer into the winter.

Being a medium to tall type kale, Sovereign, unlike giant kales, produces a thinner, lower DM stem and generally has a higher quality throughout the stem than giant types. The thinner stem and high leafy nature of Sovereign give a good leaf-to-stem ratio for its yield potential.

The high potential yields, reduced stem size and the late-flowering nature of Sovereign make it the ideal kale to sow if both quality and high yields are desirable.

The bulk of winter feed produced by kale allows pasture covers on other paddocks to be built up during the colder months while leading up to calving. In addition to this, Sovereign is an excellent option as a key part of a cropping rotation for removing weed and breaking pest cycles before leading back in to new pastures. Spitfire multi-purpose forage rape is a relatively short maturing variety (approx. 90 days, 13–14 weeks depending on the season) that provides reliable flexible feed. It is commonly used in the traditional way with a spring sowing for summer/autumn feed where leaf production and regrowth ability is a key driver of livestock performance. Lambs are often the target stock class for this purpose, but Spitfire can also be grown for cattle, including use as a single-graze supplement for dairy cows. Spitfire forage rape has the potential to increase animal production per-hectare over the summer/autumn period.

In addition to spring sowing, Spitfire can also be summer or early autumn sown (following crops like process peas or cereals) to fulfill a high quality/high yield single-graze winter feed role, with a yield potential of 6–9 t DM/ha depending on sowing date. Typically beef cattle and dairy cows are the target stock type.

Spring sown Spitfire for summer grazing can also have the addition of pasture herbs (Choice chicory or Tonic plantain), clovers (Relish red clover, Tribute or Mainstay white clover) and

ryegrass (Asset or Ohau) in a mix. These additions will increase the quality, yield and longevity of the crop. For the first grazing the clovers and herbs will often provide a small, but high quality contribution to the diet and this will increase in quantity over subsequent grazings. Herbs should not be mixed with a brassica when the crop has an aim of also removing weeds from the paddock, as their inclusion result in limited chemical options.

Another characteristic of Spitfire that makes it a popular forage rape is its impressive aphid tolerance. In a bad year there are likely to be some aphids within the crop, although there is a large difference in tolerance from the old fashioned traditional rapes. This tolerance improves Spitfire's ability to hold leaf quality and reduces its chances of being affected by viruses.

Spitfire's lower stem dry matter percentage has been observed to provide higher potential utilisation. Strip grazing is advised to reduce the potential plant loss, thus regrowth potential, although under sheep grazing Spitfire has shown to have excellent regrowth ability. If using cattle for grazing, plan for one graze only or ensure that other species are added for continued quality feed.

Ensure you talk to ATS Seed or your ATS Arable and Pastoral Representative on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) to get thorough advice on growing Sovereign Kale and Spitfire Rape.

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Super charged service

Ashburton auto electrical business Newlands is expanding its reputation as a top operator in its field. BY LINDA CLARKE



ABOVE: Newlands use the newest technology to stay at the forefront of the auto-electrical industry

MAIN IMAGE: Some of the Newlands team from left: Peter Wood, Robert Newland, Karla Newland, Jeff Naish and Rhys McPherson as this year's winners of Ruralco's Supreme Supplier Award

Newlands, established 80 years ago, won this year's Ruralco Supreme Supplier Award, testament to its excellent customer service and business growth.

Managing director Rob Newlands, whose grandfather Bill set up the battery and auto-electrical business, said Newlands was proud to receive the award which also recognised the knowledge and skill of its 33 staff across branches in Ashburton, Timaru and Rolleston.

Newlands provides automotive air conditioning, batteries, two-way radios and power tools in conjunction with workshop machinery and servicing, and mobile servicing.

Rob said Ruralco Cardholders could use their Ruralco Card at any of the branches for a competitive discount and Newlands had enjoyed a long association with ATS and now Ruralco for nearly 40 years.

The relationship has allowed Newlands to develop, expand and improve its services and products while keeping abreast of technological advances in the industry.

Newlands has recently become agents for Tait Communications, meaning the well-known and reliable brand is available to Ruralco Cardholders too. Rob said Tait's portable radios were ideal for farm communications because they were robust and had "man down" and "lone worker" features that helped farming business meet new health and safety regulations.

Whether you are buying a two-way radio, battery or power tool, Newlands staff will use their knowledge and experience to find the right quality product for the job.

Rob said staff were continually upskilling through training to keep up with rapid changes in the industry. Vehicles are more reliant on electronics and auto-electrics than 20 years ago, when breakdowns were dealt with by mechanics.

"We do a lot of training and send our guys on two or three courses a year. There is a lot of new technology around and we are electronic and auto-electrical specialists. It is far more involved than it used to be.

"Recently we've had indepth training across the battery range because with all the new technology the days of fitting any old type of battery are gone."

Battery-powered computer technology runs brakes, airbags, fuel efficiency, transmission and stability control, and motor performance so choosing the right battery is vital. Modern batteries are fit for purpose, be it for a moped, massive truck, boat or motorbike.

Fitting the wrong battery could have dire consequences but qualified technicians can

advise on the right product from over 170 different types in stock.

"Auto-electrics can be confusing and the first thing most people do when their car breaks down is take it to the local garage, but a lot of what goes wrong is electronic. Sometimes we should be the first port of call."

Newlands runs its auto-electric and power tool centre from its Kermode Street base in Ashburton; the Rolleston branch was opened in 2011 and Timaru Batteries acquired last year. The company is a proud agent for Century Batteries, an Australian-Japanese company that has been around almost as long as Newlands. The company makes batteries better suited to Australian and New Zealand weather conditions.

Rob said Newlands had worked hard to present its full range of products and services to Ruralco Cardholders. "A lot of people still don't realise the extent of what we do. We were very proud to win the Supreme Supplier Award and it was unexpected. But it highlights our strong partnership with Ruralco and the real benefits we can bring to cardholders."



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Farming passion pursued down under

Farming brings plenty of challenges in the best of years, but adding in a 20,000km journey to do it in another country gives an indication of Michael and Nicky Salvesen's commitment to make a new life on the land.

BY RICHARD RENNIE

Mike and his wife Nicky had their first insight to rural New Zealand back in 1984 when they spent their OE here.

It was to be almost 20 years before the couple pulled up stakes from their well established Scottish Borders country property to come to the bottom of the world, seriously scouting for a farm to call home.

The property in Scotland was a family farm that was relatively large by Scottish standards at 600ha and a further 1,100ha of leased land. However like many in the region there were succession issues, and struggles with a climate that bought a very short growing season. Soils were thin and the short seasons required heavy capital equipment demands that did nothing to lessen the labour costs and staffing numbers also required.

"At the peak of our harvest time we would have anything up to 40 staff, you needed all hands on to get crops in due to the short harvest period, so you not only had a lot of expensive equipment, you also needed all these staff at once, it was stressful at times," says Michael.

The farm business in Scotland was a patchwork of cropping enterprises, covering potatoes, parsnips, grains, carrots and even daffodils all alongside 800 head of cattle.

Add in an ever growing layer of compliance and growing political unrest within Scotland, and suddenly it seemed time to call somewhere else home.

He came down under resolutely committed to getting more balance into his life to make the most of family time to spend with Nicky and four sons then aged between 11 and 16.

"We were also looking for somewhere within 90 minutes of Christchurch for the boys' schooling, and close to services."

The Canterbury climate bore a few changes for the family. Perhaps surprisingly it exhibits more intense, if shorter, winters with a higher number of frosts



than in Scotland, and greater extremes between night and day temperatures all year round.

"We were more familiar with weather where there would be days with much less variation in temperature, but we do sit at a higher altitude where we are now."

The first property the family bought was on the Plains themselves, up Tramway Road near Mount Somers. While never intending the 350ha to be a "starter" farm, it did prove a valuable starting point as Michael came to understand the intricacies of running a dry stock property.

"I quickly learned there were some extremely capable operators in Canterbury to learn things from.

The seasons bought a few surprises, including snow at lambing time, managing stock without any housing and determining which crops were best to plant to do best over the summer dry period on the un-irrigated farm."

Careful management of cash flow and working capital, trading stock where possible through some lean early years eventually saw the family see a clear pathway ahead in their new home.

"We had to tune up our stock numbers a bit to suit the season, where we learned spring was okay, autumns were fine, summer was always dry, and winter was an expensive time running stock on kale."

ABOVE: The station runs a mix of deer, cattle and dairy grazers

MAIN IMAGE: Canterbury farmers Nicky and Michael Salvesen

Michael has since come to regard fodder beet as a "game changer" crop for livestock farmers on the Plains, thanks to their potential for high yield reducing the area required to be cultivated, and their exceptional energy value as feed.

"We are now getting a crop that is costing about 12c/kg drymatter with yields of about 22t/ha."

Michael has become something of a focus today for his fodder beet growing skills, having been involved in the Beef + Lamb Beef for Profit Partnership which morphed into a fodder beet partnership, now in its second year of three.

After five years at Tramway Road Michael and Nicky moved to today's farm on Upper Downs Road at Mount Somers.

The picturesque property stretches from 500m above sea level up to 850m, and while its southern faces will chill down earlier in winter, they also hold on well through drier summer months.

Today the station is running a mix of deer, cattle and dairy grazers, all providing a buffered level of income through some uncertain times for commodity returns.



ABOVE: The picturesque property stretches from 500m above sea level up to 850m

BELOW: Deer include 900 hinds and rising two year olds, with progeny also finished on the property

The beef cattle comprise 500 Angus and Hereford cows with all progeny run through to finishing, or for sale to Five Star Beef near Ashburton. Deer include 900 hinds and rising two year olds, with all progeny also finished on the property.

More recently Michael has started to run Angus and Charolais cross bulls alongside Hereford bulls which also have a ready market among dairy farmers for tail end mating.

The bulls provide valuable and flexible cash flow, and Michael is confident some of this year's mob will achieve 600kg by Christmas as 15 month old animals.

Dairy grazer numbers are down to 170, with some uncertainty over how this business will play out as the dairy downturn bites.

Running deer, cattle and dairy grazers, Mike has bought the lessons learned from fodder beet cropping to good use on the 1,460ha Wakere Station property.

Last year he had 50ha of fodder beet in the ground, and this year it will be nearer 60ha.

"There are two reasons for increasing the area this season. One is the well broadcast risk of El Nino, so more area means greater insurance against lower crop yield. The second reason relates to nitrogen losses. By having greater area with a lower expected yield we can still maintain a stocking rate and leaching will therefore be no greater."

While an effective crop, fodder beet does require attention to detail around weed control, with some highly effective treatments now available. However timing is everything.

"Usually if you think you need to do something to control the weeds, it is already too late."

Michael has also found fodder beet a crop relatively easily fed to deer and beef cattle without any significant health problems.

"The deer will self-regulate very well when fed them, and it is also pretty difficult to kill the likes of rising two cattle. Dairy cows however can be a different story; they are used to eating intensively in quite a short period of time, and can gorge themselves on them very quickly, and fatally."

Feed levels are topped up with lucerne balage for the deer and ryegrass straw for the cattle through winter. The rising two year olds have also received some palm kernel extract, responding well with weight gains of up to 1.5kg a day.



Today sheep are entirely absent from Wakere, and the 100 year old woolshed remains as it is, with the economics remaining firmly in favour of the deer and beef.

Not having sheep on the property means Michael has been able to pursue some wholesale pasture conversion to tetraploid rye grasses capable of rapid efficient regrowth under the more intensive rotational grazing system he uses with the cattle and deer. Stock are worked in mobs around a property that has its creeks and waterways well fenced off and protected with riparian strips.

"The protection work has been something of a work in progress for us and we now have a fair number of wetlands and strips for sediment trapping."

The voluntary work he has done is a contrast to some of the requirements laid down on farmers in Scotland with mandated retirement areas and zero nitrogen areas, often all part of the bargain when farmers sign up for European Union subsidies.

The farm is unirrigated, receiving around 1,000mm of rain a year and its southern facing slopes with heavier soils tend to hold on well over summer.

"But come winter, like we are now, we do get quite waterlogged on the heavier silt soil with its clay base, so you have to manage quite a large number of mobs carefully."

Longer term Michael has a refreshing optimistic take on the future of farming in New Zealand and in Canterbury. Acutely aware of NZ's small domestic market he appreciates the benefits in being a niche player in areas like venison supply, and is intending to gradually ramp up deer numbers on the Wakere.

But even this market is subject to some unlikely international forces. Greater unemployment in Europe has meant more Spanish and Polish hunters putting feral venison onto the market, keeping prices lower than they should be.

"And being a premium meat, venison has also taken a bit longer to recover from the GFC after selling at a higher price for a period, it was hit harder and fell further, and has taken longer to recover."

Northern hemisphere gives world view to Canterbury farmer

In the 12 years since leaving their native Scotland, Mike Salvesen and his wife Nicky have cemented a place in Canterbury's rural community and beyond. Relishing the opportunities for involvement within the NZ farming sector and the multiple strands that make up Canterbury's farming sector Mike is Mid Canterbury meat and fibre chairperson for Federated Farmers.

He is proud to be part of an organisation manned by some intelligent, well educated people capable of providing policy advice and knowledge that puts the Feds on equal footing around negotiating tables in Wellington.

Meantime Nicky has also been able to take advantage of their farm's relative proximity to towns and services, being on the road as a SPELD

(Specific Learning Difficulties) tutor in schools around the region. The couple have also raised their four sons who are making their own mark either here or overseas. Oldest son Andrew works in farm insurance in Scotland, Peter in tourism in Christchurch, Robert is a funds manager in London and Hamish completed his BSc (hons) in genetics at Otago.

With his broad world view of agriculture and focused approach to their own farm business Mike has some insights to what the latest challenges to dairying represent not only for that sector, but also the knock on effects through the rest of the region.

“There are really two big challenges for the region right now. The first is the North Canterbury drought, and there is little to indicate that will be easing soon, particularly if we are to believe the forecasters about El Nino.

“Meantime with the dairy downturn you are seeing some real shifts in how dairy farmers are running their businesses. They are shifting more focus back to the milking platform, reducing their demand for dairy support country, and therefore the income those operators are going to get this season, maybe beyond.”

Inevitably this will put greater pressure on lamb supplies as operators try to fill the stock and income gap with store lambs.

“We can’t have everyone do that though, it will only put pressure on store lamb prices, push the price up and lower the margin at the end.”

He sagely points to Newton’s second law coming into play on the Plains with “every action having a direct and opposite reaction.”

Meantime arable farmers are hit with lower demand for grains and other supplements, with cropping options like potatoes limited by local demand and the ability to tip over into surplus relatively quickly.

“This is all putting a considerable level of stress across the rural community and the people who serve it.”

Coming from a United Kingdom farming environment that has a domestic market of 60 million, he is highly conscious of New Zealand’s small domestic market which offers little buffer to the realities of global trade. With that comes the necessity to have compelling, innovative products to entice foreign consumers looking for a quality food experience.

Meantime despite its critics, he believes the meat sector has exhibited some remarkable and innovative products that are making NZ red meat an easier choice for consumers to make, here and abroad.

“We are seeing a very consistent product being delivered within quality parameters, which is bought at a premium, taken home and easily prepared and bought again.”

ABOVE AND RIGHT: The beef cattle comprise 500 Angus and Hereford cows with all progeny run through to finishing. The Salvesen’s have also started to run Angus and Charolais cross bulls alongside Hereford bulls



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Making great travel memories

Miserable winter? Shake it off with a great summer holiday tailored by the team at House of Travel Ashburton. BY LINDA CLARKE



Whether you would like a family holiday to the theme parks on the Gold Coast, a feast of cricket and tennis in Melbourne, a quiet beach on a Pacific Island with the latest Lee Childs book or an unforgettable experience to the UK and Europe, Maxine Whiting and her experienced team at House of Travel on East Street go to a whole new level of customer service.

Maxine and her staff of six have been to most corners of the world, stayed in accommodation ranging from budget to five-star and sampled iconic and local attractions. Their knowledge and advice can help turn your holiday from good to great.

She said great deals for travel to Europe and the UK had just been released and holiday-makers wanting to explore countries like France or Croatia have plenty to choose from. Young adults off on their big OE would also find reasonably-priced travel packages.

House of Travel staff deal in both international and domestic travel and have been helping Mid Canterbury people fly for business and pleasure for nearly 30 years. House of Travel has been part of Maxine's life since the doors opened in November 1987 and she has been owner operator for the last five years. She loves enriching people's lives through travel and creating unforgettable holiday memories.

The Ashburton business has also been recognised within the travel industry for its good work, winning House of Travel Medium size outlet of the year in 2013 and 2014 and Maxine was voted travel agent of the year in 2014 at the travel industry awards.

She is quick to point out that the success of the business is due to its team strength—the whole team are experienced consultants, who

love to share experiences and tap into each other's specialist knowledge to enhance customers' trips.

Anna Schmack joined House of Travel in 1998 and her experience and knowledge is vast on many corners of the world. Anna specialises in longhaul travel, in particular UK, Europe, Africa and Canada.

Nathan Bartlett joined the team in May 2010 with a background in wholesale travel within the House of Travel group. Nathan enjoys taking on many challenges within the business but specialises in selling longhaul travel.

Bronwyn Wooding has been at House of Travel since May 2012. She has travelled extensively over the years and can share many experiences with clients. She can book anything from a domestic flight to a round-the-world journey.

The other Maxine in the team, Maxine Chisnall works three days a week. Maxine's passion for travelling and experience is second to none. Having visited many places in the world on her own and with her family, her knowledge and the way she portrays these experiences is unique.

Aimee Mangin joined the team in June 2011. She is a fantastic consultant and has travelled to many destinations and is always keen to make your holiday special. Aimee really loves turning a families dreams into reality with a package designed just for that family to the Gold Coast or the Pacific Islands.

Mandy Reid shares her knowledge with customers three days a week. She has travelled extensively to Australia, South Pacific, Thailand and Europe. Mandy has just returned from a trip to Bali so has all the latest information on Bali.

Maxine Whiting herself has travelled extensively and says she is motivated by trying to do the best she can for clients. Having travelled to many places she has a lot of tips and tricks to offer to clients and is always willing to share this knowledge.

House of Travel hold a register and will contact clients when specials become available for destinations they want to travel to. Maxine said the internet provided plenty of information and motivation to travel and using House of Travel to book your whole package means you have peace of mind through your entire travel experience and know you have someone to contact at any time for assistance.



ABOVE: Maxine Whiting has been owner and operator for the last five years

MAIN IMAGE: The success of the business is due to the team of experienced consultants who love to share experiences. From Left Nathan Barlett, Maxine Whiting, Anna Schmack, Maxine Chisnall, Bronwyn Wooding, Mandy Reid and Aimee Mangin

"We're there to support people the whole trip. If something happens in the world, a volcano erupts in Indonesia and planes can't fly, then we are there to help."

She said it was all about enriching people's lives through travel and making life-long memories—all House of Travel consultants understand customers have only four weeks leave a year and they ensure those weeks are well planned and offer treasured memories.

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A straight drive down the fairway

Last week, I noticed a property which borders a local golf course, unfortunately other than the obvious boundary fence, it was hard to know where the dairy platform finished and the golf course began. There were patches of rough which had considerably more grass than on the dairy platform.

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY BERNARDITA SALDIAS AND CRAIG TROTTER, CENTRE FOR DAIRY EXCELLENCE

The spring to date across the majority of the country has been fairly difficult, very wet down south, dry and cold through the middle of the country and wet and colder than usual in parts of the North Island, with one of the colder winters in recent memory, grass growth has been minimal

with balance date looking to be around 10–14 days longer to achieve than what is typically normal. This has placed undue pressure on many cows and farmers alike in what otherwise is a difficult year. With the low pasture growth seen this spring due to low soil temperature, limited sunlight

and high rainfall, feeding your cows to satisfy the requirements for mating preparation could be a challenge. Low feeding levels and a loss of cow body condition before mating can have a significant effect on the farm 6 week in calf rate and empty rate of the herd this season, see Table 1.



should have hit balance date. Make sure you keep a close eye on pasture growth through regular pasture walks; there are plenty of good pasture wedge programmes available so you can make the most of your cheapest and most reliable feed source. The lead in to balance date should have ensured that cows were fully fed with a slow fixed spring rotation plan and the input of supplement to satisfy cow demand in the lead up to peak milk production. It is vital to not restrict the feeding level of the herd as this will have a bigger impact on your milk production and mating performance. Dairy cows are in negative energy balance after calving and they require the correct feeding levels for their production and reproduction performance.

Get somebody who is DairyNZ certified to assess body condition score (BCS) of the herd to identify those cows that are at risk and prioritise them offering extra pasture allocation or supplements to increase BCS. Keep in mind that cows calving in BCS 5.0-5.5 should be in the range of 4-4.5 at least for mating and in a plane of rising nutrition. As can be seen in the table, cows with body conditions score below 4.0 will be impacted considerably in their reproductive cycle and therefore in their calving date and milk production for next season.

A reduced stocking rate will increase pasture allowance to the herd, at this stage with the favourable beef schedules, many farmers have culled up to 10% of the herd and have altered to some degree the system to a production per cow rather than per hectare. A lower stocking rate farming system takes considerably more skill to ensure that feed quality is maintained through the peak growing times. Take the time to speak to a trusted advisor around this to ensure your base feed resource maintains high feed quality and the most can be made in a challenging season. After the first herd test, there is an opportunity to identify those cows that are candidates for removal from the herd without a large impact on milk production.

The input of supplements to the herd is an important consideration, with the current pricing, palm kernel is probably the most widely available and cost effective feed to provide good quality dry matter (DM) feed supplement on a short term basis. DairyNZ have recently re-released a supplement feeding profitability tool on their website which is very useful and provides a good tool to help in the decision making process.

Some farms are considering shifting their calving date later in order to better match feed demand and supply next spring, this is favourable and with a tighter calving pattern, there can be very little effect on total days in milk as a result leading to potentially less supplement inputs in the spring whilst maintaining similar total season milk production

It is important that cows are fed to meet their dry matter consumption requirements, usually at least 3.5 to 4% of their live weight i.e. a 475 kg crossbred cow wants to be offered at least 16.6

to 19kg DM/day. It is very important that feed composition through the mating period also stays as stable (or as consistent as possible at least through the AI period).

Depending on the season, many farms often see a feed pinch early in the second round and if the feed supply to the cows does fall, this will in turn have negative consequences on the success of mating and as well of course have implications for the calving rate next season. In this situation where the platform looks more like a golf course than a dairy farm; (with average covers less than 2,000kg DM/ha), it will be important to hold round length to at least 25 days, utilise good quality supplement and not be tempted to enter the spiral of death through speeding the round up to keep the cows fed and run even more short of available pasture at the end of the first mating cycle.

This season more than most, it is important to have a mating plan ready for monitoring and recording pre-mating heats. Make sure your staff know to identify cows on heat, take the time for training; attend the local DairyNZ event days in your area or talk to your local vet around training and upskilling opportunities. Use a good heat detection system as missing heats will cost you money. Identify the non-cycling cows early and contact your veterinarian to discuss the available options. It will be natural this season to minimise the use of reproduction intervention tools, this is fair enough but remember it will have implications on next season's production and performance where fingers crossed the payout will be much more favourable to increasing days in milk and therefore profitability. Decisions made in the heat of the moment this season will have longer term effects in performance of the farm.

Use this season as redefining the benchmarks for your farm system, of course much focus has been on cost control and to a point, this season will have a generational impact on how many farmers view their systems of operation redefining 'normal' farm working expenses for seasons to come.

Lastly take some time off the farm where possible, as the saying goes, if life gives you a lemon, make lemonade; get the 5 iron out from the garage and take the team for a slice down the fairway between milking, after the urea has gone on of course.



TABLE 1: The impact of body condition score (BCS) loss in early lactation on potential reproductive performance (From Incalf, DairyNZ)

MEAN HERD BCS LOSS	POSSIBLE DECREASE IN 6 WEEK IN-CALF RATE (%)	POSSIBLE INCREASE IN EMPTY RATE (%)
Less than 0.5	-	-
0.5 - 0.75	-2	1
0.75-1	-3	2
1-1.25	-4	3
1.25-1.5	-5	4
More than 1.5	-6	5

Therefore, now is the time to start thinking ahead to overcome this difficult period of low feed availability. There are several management options and some of them might suit your system and your actual situation better than others.

First, have close control of pasture covers and utilisation, when you're reading this, most farms

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Connecting regional & rural New Zealand

In today's 'always-on' world, fast and reliable connectivity is becoming as vital to New-Zealanders as utilities like power and water. ARTICLE PROVIDED BY SPARK NEW ZEALAND

Spark New Zealand is ensuring even more rural residents will have access to high speed data in and outside of the home by rolling out fast 4G to the regions and rural places of New Zealand, using the recently government-auctioned 700MHz radio spectrum.

The company has already delivered 4G to more than 130 cities, towns and rural places across the country with plans to continue its rollout to even more locations over the next two-years.

The 700MHz frequency band is the ideal spectrum to deliver fast mobile broadband to rural New Zealand as it needs fewer base stations to reach a larger area and the WiFi signal carries further through buildings and other obstacles.

Spark has the largest slice of 700MHz spectrum making it even faster for rural dwellers and business owners to harness new technologies at the farm gate, in the paddock, or in the home. The more 700MHz spectrum a provider owns, the better the speed, capacity and customer experience—particularly at busy times.

Aka Aka dairy farmer Tony Walters found Spark's 700MHz mobile network makes a huge difference to his productivity. He uses the technology for environmental monitoring on his dairy farm including updating data while sitting on his motorbike. Walters says he runs a farm weather station tracking wind speed, rain and air temperature. He also collects data on soil moisture. This information is regularly fed to ReGen, an agritech firm, which then sends Walters a text message at 8:20am each day telling him how much cow effluent he can apply and reports telling him how much ground water he can take each day. Measuring soil moisture and temperature out in the paddocks means Walters can get the best results from applying fertilizer. He says: "It means you're not wasting it. We now live in a world of traceability, being able to prove you are farming in a responsible and sustainable way is important."

ABOVE: Tony Walters, Aka Aka Dairy Farmer

Spark recently launched Rural Wireless Broadband, a self-install service giving eligible customers fast and reliable access to the internet using Spark's 4G mobile network.

Mr Walters says: "Rural Wireless Broadband really has surpassed our most optimistic expectations. The device was easy to set up and within minutes we were good to go.

"Living in rural New Zealand, you get used to slow internet speeds and it kind of becomes the lay of the land which is pretty frustrating as we're already strapped for time. Spark's Rural Wireless Broadband service has given us internet speeds that we've never had before and best of all we've actually got enough data to take advantage of the service."

"Being able to access the internet faster allows our farm to make better use of the latest apps and online farming tools to do things like store, record and analyse on-farm data. All of this helps us make better, more informed decisions, making sure we can work faster and smarter." said Mr Walters.

Spark expects that as it expands its 4G network the number of customers that will be eligible to access Rural Wireless Broadband will also increase at the same pace.



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Demonstrating sustainable farming practices—burden or opportunity?

When it's time to complete your Farm Environment Plan do you roll your eyes and think "I could think of more productive ways to spend this day".

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY CHARLOTTE GLASS, AGRIMAGIC

Perhaps you pine for the "good old days" when it was no one's business but your own how you chose to farm your property? Or do you think "I don't mind showing people that our farm is producing food (or fibre) in a responsible way, improving it where we can, and contributing to our local community and economy"?

As with all businesses, farming is changing with the times. There is more to do, more people interested in how we do things and more knowledge required to be great at it. In spring time when each day seems far too short and you wonder if you will ever catch up, it is not always easy to think positively about the new environmental compliance requirements and nutrient constraints that are impacting your farm business.

It might not be as bad as you think. If you don't already have a basic understanding of how the new rules may impact your business then it might be a good idea to plan to address it once you have your immediate spring work load pressures under control. Once you understand how the rules may impact you and have a plan for the future it always feels better.

As a completely biased Kiwi I think that New Zealand farmers are some of the most adaptive in the world. Once we understand the cause or principles, we can often figure out a unique way to solve a problem or meet a need. Regional councils here are trying to tackle water quality trends differently to our friends abroad. Ours are aiming towards "effects based" policies, rather than prescribing or restricting inputs. Although it might feel like it is all a bit crazy right now, it might be a much better approach if we can cope with the mess in the middle as they try to find the best way forward.

In Canterbury the Regional Council has focussed on the use of Overseer nutrient budgets and Farm Environment Plans in their Land and Water Regional Plan. Most farmers now require nutrient budgets. Overseer is a tool that estimates the impact of farm inputs, management or infrastructure on nutrient losses. It helps work through a complex and dynamic biological system to estimate nutrient flows on a farm. Overseer is useful when you use it to compare a current farm management situation (or an historic baseline) with a future scenario on the same property. It can help predict where your changes may have most impact from a nutrient loss perspective. Overseer is updated twice a year so the result in kilograms of losses can vary with versions. This can cause a lot of confusion. Don't go throwing the baby out with the bathwater though, Overseer is a good model and when applied in the context for which it was designed, driven by qualified people, it is a useful decision support tool to help improve nutrient use and manage losses.

Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) are also being introduced. The templates used by different councils may vary but the key objectives in each are likely to be similar. The good thing about the FEPs is that they revolve around objectives that every good farmer shares, for example to improve irrigation and nutrient use efficiency whilst minimising losses. Many farmers are already implementing good practices in relation to these objectives, so might not have many changes to make. So what's different? You will have to have to write your plan down or put it into an online system, someone will audit your actions and you do have to provide evidence to demonstrate what you have been up to.

Perhaps you should consider this document to be a "do", rather than a "plan" because it is your actions that will be used as evidence in the audit. The goal is for farmers to self-manage to achieve improvement against each objective with audits ensuring you are making the required progress. Try not to put actions into your plan that require you to spend money on technology for compliance only. You should be focussing on changes that give you benefits resulting in



resource use efficiency first rather than spending money just to demonstrate to a regulator that you are doing as you say. Using soil moisture metering technology to improve irrigation scheduling decisions is a great example of technology that can improve both efficiency of resource use and help you to demonstrate this to a regulator. Industry groups have worked together to come up with a list of industry agreed "good

management practices” that are frequently referred to when it is time to construct Farm Environment Plans. It is important that as farmers you keep your focus on why those practices are considered good. You might be able to think of a better, cheaper, or less risky means of achieving the same end—and given that the aim is to consider the effect, not to shoehorn you into particular practices it is important that we continue to keep focussed on “why”. Back yourself to think of innovative cost effective ways of achieving the same ends.

When it comes to Farm Environment Planning, keep it simple, take your time in setting up a good process to capture your evidence along with your plan and remember this is a marathon, not a sprint.

farms may have consents for irrigation, effluent disposal and those that stipulate how the land is used (land use consents) when you look to purchase them.

These consents may be linked to a particular Farm Environment Plan as well. All should be checked. The value of a piece of land in Canterbury, for example, must now also consider any nutrient or land use constraints that may be associated because these can impact its future use. I urge you to use qualified people as early as possible to investigate these aspects for you. There are all sorts of details that the emerging rules require you to consider.

Farm Environment Plans and Overseer nutrient budgets are not as scary as they sound, but if you don't take time to understand the implications

and fibre to (in a good year) return a profit for ourselves and our community. Taking care of those natural resources and being great stewards of the land and water are as vital to our long term success as husbandry of crops and stock or management of people. We need skills in all facets.

Due to the nation's desire to protect New Zealand's water quality and quantity, farmers are now required to focus on the environmental impacts of our farming practices in particular. Happily, most farmers I meet share similar sustainability objectives; after all, we have enjoyed the benefits of promoting New Zealand and our products internationally as “clean and green” or “100% pure”, so how do we like being asked to provide a bit of evidence to demonstrate



When you are making strategic decisions about your farm system, succession or the sale, purchase or lease of property you now need to consider nutrient based regulations as well. In a purchase situation this may involve demonstrating to a lender that the scenario you have based your budgets on also meets regional council rules. All resource consents that are linked to a parcel of land should also be viewed. In the future many

for your business you are farming blind. It's kind of like checking the weather forecast when you make your plans for the week. You really don't want to get caught out with a storm especially when it was in the forecast.

People who choose a life involved with agriculture tend to share a common desire; to leave our farms in a better state. Every day we utilise our natural resources, growing food

to others that we are responsible resource managers—is it all a burden too great or an opportunity we could launch from in the future? As an eternal optimist I can see opportunities along with the challenges. I urge you to plan for these changes. It can all sound scary when you are already under time or financial pressure, however it needn't be. Once you have a plan it always feels better.

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Blacklows TradeZone Ashburton is 62 years young; a family owned business, owned and operated by the Blacklow family. BY LINDA CLARKE

Siblings Pete and Sue Blacklow have grown up in the business, which is aligned to the national TradeZone group. They are experts in their field and their knowledge and acquired skills have made the business the success it is today. Previously trading as G.J. Blacklow & Co, they solely operated as an engine reconditioning workshop. It was as little as seven years ago that Peter and Sue saw the opportunity to re-brand and expand their business horizons to become a member of the TradeZone Group which then incorporated the tool side into their business. Since then the Ashburton based Blacklows has been supplying Mid Canterbury with engineering equipment and accessories for repairs and maintenance work.

Pete said the move to bring TradeZone into the established engine reconditioning workshop and supplies business had paid off and resulted in the company receiving several national awards, including TradeZone Store of the Year in the small business category and the Nationwide Kerrick Waterblaster Award, both in 2014.

With the expansion of TradeZone, Blacklows can now help on two fronts—they run an engineering workshop as well as a retail

showroom stocked with tools and engineering supplies for those able to do the work themselves. Pete said farmers in the current market were opting for repairs over new replacements of machinery and the South Street showroom and workshop was a busy place, with a staff of nine.

“There’s been more of an emphasis on repairs and maintenance and we’ve had a very busy winter. A lot have come into the store and tooled up so they can have a go fixing things themselves.”

Pete says scheduling regular repair and maintenance work prolongs the life of machinery and equipment.

Over the years the company has seen many changes in the accuracy of materials handling and advancements in the engineering industry, but is pleased to note that the DIY trade is alive and well. Blacklows stock an extensive range of portable Esseti welders, which are ideal for light engineering work. The Esseti brand is trusted and well known for the range that caters for all jobs—from the farm workshop through to industrial requirements.

While TradeZone’s online presence was important, most customers liked to talk through their needs. Blacklows also offer onsite training with welding equipment for those customers



ABOVE: Becoming a member of the TradeZone Group has incorporated the tool and parts side into their business

MAIN IMAGE: Blacklows customers like that they can come down to the TradeZone store and talk through their needs

who have purchased their product in store.

The original side to the business is the engineering workshop, Blacklows offer a full range of automotive engineering, from simple repairs and maintenance through to engine rebuilds. If it involves a motor, the senior automotive machinists are fully qualified to recondition any engine, no matter what shape or size.

Blacklows also undertakes general engineering work and combines this with its specialty automotive field. The workshop team are all highly skilled and trained. “We have kept our strong position in the marketplace due to our staff keeping such high standards,” Pete said.

With the business reaching 62 years this year, Pete says the team’s experience and knowledge kept customers coming back. They are continually looking at ways to improve their systems and stay at the forefront of the engineering industry.

Keep an eye out for Blacklows at the Ashburton A & P Show this month, they’ll be there with all the latest DIY and engineering tips.



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You + succession planning

You and your family are unique. It follows that any successful succession plan must be tailored to your family's characters, circumstances, peculiarities, ambitions, financial reality and farm. ARTICLE PROVIDED BY TAVENDALE + PARTNERS



Succession planning, by its very nature, impacts upon successive generations. The decisions being made are strategic ones, involving critical assessment of risks. Often profitability and financial viability will dictate the options available, regardless of desires. Sometimes change is involved and agility necessitated. Emotions cannot be ignored or forgotten, just as economic realities must be weighed in the balance. The challenge of escalating capital values is a daunting one, and (welcome or not) environmental capital investment is inescapable in our modern world. An increasingly complex operating environment and the emergence of different operating structures inform the choices you must make (look at the myriad of different options in relation to milk supply and the capital implications thereof).

Whilst there is always a desire to be fair to children and grandchildren, let's be clear: fair does not necessarily mean equal division of capital assets between family members. Nor does the law require this. New Zealand farmers are world leaders. Whilst corporate farming, in many senses, is developing, the essence of the majority of NZ farms will still be successful families who have addressed succession challenges while still achieving growth.

Succession planning is not a do-it-yourself job. Nor is it a paint-by-numbers exercise by professionals following a favoured approach that they might have been using for years. What works for one family may not work for another.

If succession success is to be achieved for your family and farming enterprise, a raft of

considerations must be discussed. Many of the questions that must be tackled, such as timing, profitability, control, finances, and the positions of spouses as regards capital and income entitlements, are issues that cannot be avoided but can be very uncomfortable to discuss.

Central to all of these issues, is genuine communication—for without being able to talk about what you have, and what you want, it is very hard to plan for where you want to be. There is no quick fix, no cookie-cutter answer, no succession planning rubber stamp to let you off the hook. Nor is it appropriate to hide behind 'my lawyer or my accountant told me I have to do this' when communicating with family members.

If you are prepared to invest in the thought, planning, effort and professional cost associated with tailoring a successful, financially viable succession plan, the benefits to you and your family are immeasurable. Sadly, we see instances where succession has not been addressed with any consistency, decisions are not made during a person's lifetime, and the consequences are almost invariably negative both financially and emotionally for the families involved.

It is important that your chosen professional advisors work together to form a multi-skilled team equipped to tackle the various legal, financial, practical and taxation issues that arise. Just as genuine communication is required from you, your advisors are only useful and effective if they are also listening to each other, understand what you are wanting to achieve and are working together with complementary expertise.

Flexibility in any succession plan is vital as nothing is more certain than change. Some of it can be foreseen, some of it cannot. The will or trust deed that may have been appropriate for your circumstances at 25 is almost certainly not likely to be appropriate at the age of 35. Time moves on and it is important that vital documentation such as wills, trust deeds, and directions to trustees represent your current thinking and—just as importantly—the thinking you have conveyed to family members that may be directly affected. They may have relied upon, in good faith, the assurances they have been given. The importance of a current and up-to-date will can never be underestimated.

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Wool for schools initiative a huge success

Parents have a young Bank Peninsula couple's tenacious attitude to thank for merino jerseys appearing as a uniform option in schools up and down the country through the Merino Wool For School initiative.

BY ANNIE STUDHOLME



Canterbury farmers Carl and Tori Uren

Carl and Tori Uren run a large sheep, beef and dairy support operation on Banks Peninsula. Raised in wool themselves, they have long known about the benefits of the natural fibre. Right from birth, they have made a point of dressing their four children in merino wool.

However, when eldest daughter, Annabel, started school three years ago the couple were shocked to find the only jersey option was made from synthetic polar-fleece. "She had been wearing merino since she was a baby and we really didn't want to put her in polar-fleece. Being farmers that would have been like buying a nylon carpet," quips Carl.

The couple went on the hunt for a merino alternative but found little on the market, so began toying with the idea of creating their own niche business. "We couldn't believe that no-one else was doing it." Schools they contacted to see if the idea had merit were positive, which led them to approach a major New Zealand merino company for backing and support for the venture, but they were turned down.

"She had been wearing merino since she was a baby and we really didn't want to put her in polar-fleece. Being farmers that would have been like buying a nylon carpet."

Undeterred, the Uren's pushed on, raking in family to help with a design, and developing a name and logo, but the obstacles kept coming. "We really struggled initially. Even just finding someone who could supply us with a heavy duty roll of merino fabric took ages, and once we had found the material then we had to find someone who could make them for us at a reasonable price, but we just didn't take no for an answer," says Tori.



ABOVE: The Uren family from left Tom (2), Tori, Sam (6), Annabel (8), Carl, and Georgie (3)

RIGHT: Sam Uren in his merino school uniform

BELOW: Tori takes care of the day-to-day running of the Merino Wool for Schools business

Local Christchurch manufacturer 140 Clothing came on board to produce the jerseys with Hurrell Apparel enlisted to do the embroidery.

From there, they trialed the jerseys at their local Duvauchelle Primary School to ensure they would withstand the rigours of playground hijinks, five days a week, but more importantly whether or not children were happy to wear them.

"Producing a great jersey was one thing, but if the kids weren't happy wearing them we knew there was no point in persevering," she says. Thankfully they needn't have worried, with kids loving the simple quarter-zipped design.

Unfortunately though, it wasn't just the children that the Uren's needed to persuade. Right from the outset they knew that price was going to be a problem for many parents. Despite their best endeavours to keep the price as low as possible



their jerseys retail at \$75, marginally higher than their polar-fleece counterparts, but as the Uren's point out, still much lower than any equivalent merino jersey on the market.

But when you compare polar-fleece to merino wool for warmth, there is no comparison, says Carl. Unlike the "itchy and scratchy" wool jerseys of old, their machine-washable 340 gram merino wool jerseys are practical, lightweight, hard-wearing, breathable and made from 100 percent natural fibre right here in New Zealand and are no match for their synthetic equivalents. "We knew it was never going to be for everyone, but we wanted to provide that option."

Once they were satisfied they could produce a quality product, the Uren's started contacting schools South Island-wide offering jerseys in any colour with the school's name embroidered on the front. Tori emailed 157 decile nine and ten schools, disappointingly receiving just one response, so they changed tack, enlisting friends and family to push their product in schools. Once mums got involved, slowly word began to spread, but still business remained small.

Earlier this year the Uren's partnered up with PGG Wrightson Wool, utilising its involvement in the international Campaign for Wool initiative, which has had a huge impact on their business. Not only has it introduced them to fabric suppliers in the United States, but

also provided them with access to marketing expertise.

That connection, combined with the power of social media through a Facebook page, is behind a business boom over the past few months with almost 100 schools in the pipeline or offering jerseys as a uniform option already, and enquiries are continuing to trickle in daily from as far afield as Australia. In response to increasing interest from secondary schools, they have taken another gigantic step recently launching an equivalent merino jersey to replace the traditional V-neck jerseys worn by intermediate and high school age students.

For the Uren's though, the biggest thrill associated with the company's growth is its ability to bring the story full-circle, teaming up with merino farmers to supply the wool direct. "It's great story to have merino farmers supplying wool for merino jerseys that are being worn by Kiwi kids." As farmers ourselves, it was important for us to be able to give something back to the industry, adds Carl.

"When we started we thought if we could get 50 schools by the end of this year and another 50 schools next year then we'd be happy but to get there in a few months has been overwhelming. The whole thing has been a huge learning curve though," says Carl.

The success the Uren's are experiencing with the Merino Wool For School initiative is testament to their "never give up" attitude, an approach that has been their hallmark throughout their short farming careers.

Both Carl and Tori come from strong farming roots. Although Carl's parents have a large property in North Canterbury the option to go farming on the home-farm when they returned from their big OE wasn't available, so they decided to have a crack at it on their own.

Despite knowing nothing about Banks Peninsula, they were attracted by its lack of intensity and climate. "It's just a great place to farm. The winters are not too cold and the summers are not too dry, and there's no need for break-feeding or feeding out," says Carl.

The couple started off managing a farm for Irish businessman Eamon Cleary before going into leasing properties with the long-term goal of one day owning their own piece of paradise. They started out with nothing, slowly increasing the size of the operation, leasing different blocks all over the peninsula.

About four years ago, the Uren's seized an opportunity to purchase 240ha at Totara Point in Le Bons Bay, with long-time associates Richard and Lynley Holloway taking the other 260ha.

Today, in addition to the home farm, their current operation includes a further 1,700ha spread across properties next door, and in nearby Akaroa and Pigeon Bay, the longest of which they have leased for near on nine years. With just himself and stock manager, Ash Wadsworth, who has been with them for two years, they maintain a simple operation

running 11 stock units with about 2,600 Romney/Texel cross ewes on the leased blocks and 900 (approx.) hoggets' at home, around 300 carry-over cows and grazes up to 1,000 dairy heifers, while Tori takes care of the day-to-day running of the Merino Wool For Schools business, helps on the farm and is full-time mum to the children.

"It's just a great place to farm. The winters are not too cold and the summers are not too dry, and there's no need for break-feeding or feeding out,"

While the properties are more than 30 minutes apart, they do not see it as a disadvantage. "If it was a big hill country property it would take half an hour to drive out the back anyhow, and this way it gives us good scope and good balance. We never seem to get caught out because one farm is always better than the other. If need be we can just move stock from one to another," says

Carl. Because farms tend to be smaller on the peninsula, if you want to go bigger, you need to look further away from home, he adds.

Carl says they are always looking to try and grow their business, make changes and improve. "It's about constantly looking for opportunities and grabbing them when you can. The bigger you get, the more opportunities that seem to come along."

Although leasing is not everyone's ideal stepping stone to farm ownership, the Uren's can't be more positive about their experience but he does have some advice for those starting out. "We started out with nothing. It's about taking that first step and giving you something to build on; you can't think something is too small or sit back and wait for this dream farm to come along because chances are someone else will have more capital behind them than you."

BELOW TOP: The Uren's maintain a simple operation running 11 stock units including sheep and grazing for dairy heifers

BELOW BOTTOM: Carl Uren on their home farm at Totara Point in Le Bons Bay



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International cold calling investment scams

The phone starts to ring. The caller, who says they're in New York, is approaching you out of the blue with an amazing investment offer. The numbers seem to add up, and all you have to do is act quickly so you don't miss out. What would you do?

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY BRONWYN GROOT, BNZ SECURITY AND FRAUD CO-ORDINATOR



Even the savviest of investors might struggle with this on-the-spot decision. These cold-calling scams are becoming increasingly common, and have caused widespread financial losses to New Zealand investors.

The layers of deception make these scams especially insidious. The callers are extremely persuasive, sophisticated and well organised. The scams can unfold over time and encompass multiple stings. They use complicated information channels, relationship building and persuasive props to sustain their veneer of legitimacy.

The scammers have sophisticated scripts and a range of sales techniques, plus an impressive array of fake names, titles and business addresses. Often, they claim to operate out of financial centres such as Tokyo, Hong Kong, New York and London.

They start by asking questions about your financial needs or habits, in an attempt to build rapport, then provide you with hot tips to invest in oil, mineral and future options. High returns are

promised over a short period of time.

However, once you have invested, they may say they need to switch your share trading scheme due to unexpected funding problems. Then, when that company 'fails' a buy-out is recommended, and eventually you will lose the capital. In come the 'saviours'—the traders that buy shares from failed companies—and all you have to do is invest some more money. And the plot goes on and on.

Here's a story about Tim (not his real name), who received a call saying that a press release was going out shortly regarding a new aviation product, which would result in the stock price rising from US\$2.70 to \$US10. They implied that the information about the press release was special insider knowledge.

The deal sounded good, and, once he invested, they even sent him a link to fake press releases to back up their story. They also set up fake websites, including online share portfolio

accounts so that Tim could log in to see his shares' value rising.

After this initial proposition Tim was then offered other shares that were due to 'float', and they let him know that a new announcement was looming. They gave feasible explanations for their promises about the price gains, as well as excuses when what was promised didn't eventuate.

With each sale Tim was pressured into acting quickly so he wouldn't miss out. After a long period of time Tim eventually came to the heart-breaking realisation that he had been deceived and ended up losing close to \$400,000.

In New Zealand, brokers need to be qualified to offer different levels of investment advice, and there are similar rules overseas.

With lower investment rates and the lower dairy price pay-out, New Zealand investors are at even more risk of falling for the sales pitch of these scammers. These appalling scams tear people's lives apart and many struggle to recover from the financial loss and the emotional burden placed upon them.

If you receive a cold-call offering investment opportunities, stay calm and don't commit to anything. Dig, dig and dig for further information. Contact the Financial Markets Authority or even your bank. And most importantly, seek independent financial legal advice before you sign anything or send any money.

For more information on scams visit:

Financial Markets Authority: www.fma.govt.nz

MBIE's Consumer Affairs page: www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz

Netsafe: www.netsafe.org.nz

Department of Internal Affairs: www.dia.govt.nz



Educating the public and making them aware of scams is a strong focus for the BNZ.

Bronwyn Groot, BNZ's Security and Fraud Co-ordinator, spends much of her time on the road teaching about scams and

supporting people who fall victim to them. Her seminars, appropriately named "Scam Savvy", are aimed at raising awareness in a bid to head off criminals.

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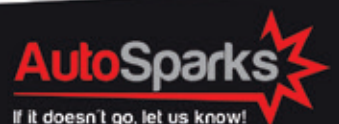
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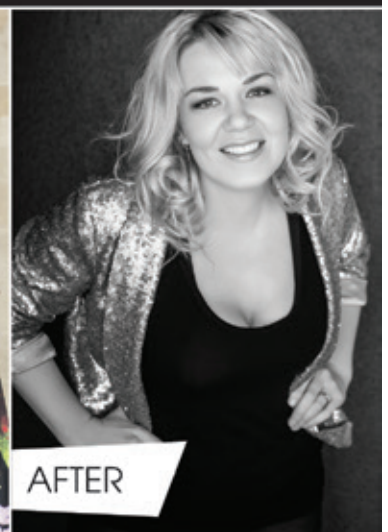
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Tech Tips

BECOME TECH-SAVVY WITH RURALCO'S TOP TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Astutely App

This edition we focus on apps that replace every day tools.

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



Bubble Level

This app allows you to measure the alignment of surfaces, calculate angles in various situations and track your inclination. This works exactly as the physical tool, all you need to do is place your phone on the surface you want to measure. The three features include a bubble level, surface meter and an inclinometer.



Units Plus

This app offers a very simple unit converter, covering 12 categories and many different units. You have the ability to convert area, currency, data-computer data, fuel-mileage, length, power, pressure, speed, temperature, time, volume and weight-mass. The currency exchange rates are downloaded every 15 minutes when the app is opened. This is a reliable tool that can be used in various situations.



Easy Measure

Easy Measure measures how far away an object is from you, simply aim your phone towards any object in your surroundings and Easy Measure will display the distance towards that object on top of the camera image. You have

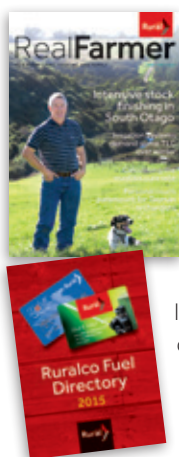
access to a comprehensive animated tutorial on how to use Easy Measure for the most accurate results.



Timesheet Plus

This app replaces the paper based or excel timesheet. You can create your timesheet on your phone and simply send through as a pdf to your manager for approval. You have the ability to create default start and end times to make entry even

easier and set time intervals for your breaks. You can then flag your timesheets as sent or paid. There will be no excuses for not filling in your timesheet.



View the Real Farmer electronically

Want to share a Real Farmer story with a friend or family member? Or lost your copy of the Fuel Directory?

Simply visit the Ruralco website>My Ruralco>Ruralco Publications; here you will find all the latest Ruralco Publications, available to read online.

If you need help finding this on the Ruralco website, contact Ruralco on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) and one of the Ruralco team will step you through the process.

Simple tricks to reduce every day data usage

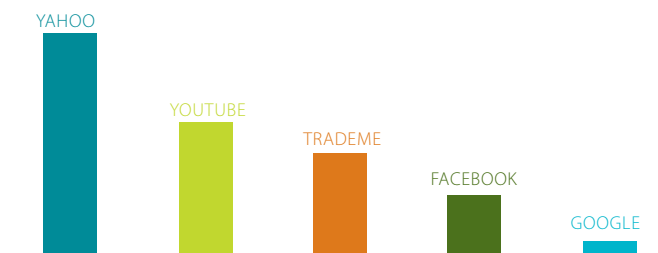
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connecting rural nz

We understand how valuable your monthly data is to you, so we thought we would share a couple of helpful tricks that could make you more aware of where your data allowance is going. Websites are constantly upgrading their content which means that you will use more data now visiting the same websites than you would have before.

When you open your home page, before going to whichever site you plan to, new data is downloaded to your computer. If your home page is Yahoo for example, it can download 2.5Mb of text, images and advertising, do this three times a day and this can secretly use a large portion of your monthly allowance.

To save data, set your home page as Google. It has a very clean home page, with minimal images/videos and downloads less than 200Kb of data... that's thirteen times smaller than Yahoo. As a guide, if there is video content playing, you are using data every minute



GRAPH SHOWING WHICH HOME PAGE USES THE MOST DATA
Results from saving webpage supplied by Internet Explorer 17/8/2015

Watching movies and TV episodes via the likes of Netflix has become hugely popular. You can control the amount of data Netflix uses by adjusting the data usage settings. This can make a huge difference over time to your overall data usage. The highest possible viewing quality could use 10 times as much data for you to watch the same movie on a lower viewing quality.

Another common website for catching up on free to air programs is TVNZ ON Demand. As you are watching streamed data the same will apply, you can watch in different levels of quality which could result in higher data usage depending on the settings.

If you watch five hours a week for a month on TVNZ On Demand, the below data usage will apply:

- Low Quality 0.64 GB
- Medium Quality 1.5 GB
- High Quality 3.2 GB

You can visit www.tvnz.co.nz to calculate your personal usage for TVNZ On Demand.

Radio broadcast over the internet also uses data but much less, a standard 64kbps internet radio stream is about 30Mb per hour of listening time.

Lost or Stolen Cards?

If you are a Ruralco Cardholder and your card has been lost or stolen, you should contact Ruralco on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) immediately. In all cases, be sure to quote your member number—this can be found on your statement.

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Excise tax refund

If you're a business owner who uses petrol-powered equipment in your operations, you may be entitled to an excise tax refund of up to 69¢ per litre. This includes using petrol powered equipment to:

- Move about the land you and your staff work on (i.e. ATVs used by farmers);
- Work the land the equipment operates on (i.e. lawnmowers used by green keepers, hydraladas used by orchardists);
- Keep your businesses operating (i.e. builders using generators, chainsaws used in forestry).

To lodge a claim to refund fuel excise duty, contact Kerry Aldrich from the NZTA (New Zealand Transport Authority) on 06 953 7021 or 0800 108 809 (Ext 7021), she will advise you on your claim, register your request and ensure you have the correct forms to fill out.



Have you checked the price you are paying for your electricity?

ATS Energy can provide you with a free no obligation comparison from our energy partners so you can see if there are any potential savings to be had for your home or farm by paying your electricity accounts through ATS. Contact Tracey Gordon today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).



Is it time to renew your Approved Handler Certificate?

Your Approved Handler Certificate may have expired or be about to expire. Make sure these are up to date before its time to purchase or apply chemicals. Please contact Peter Jacob on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287) and he will be able to assist you with the renewal process.

Who would you like to see become a Ruralco Supplier?

Have your say in which businesses accept the Ruralco Card for payment by becoming Ruralco Suppliers. As we expand our supplier network we are interested to know who are the most valuable businesses to you and your family. Suggest a business by calling 0800 787 256, or emailing ruralco@ruralco.co.nz.

Agrecovery

ATS has supported the Agrecovery scheme for a number of years with collection sites at both Ashburton and Rakaia and there are a growing number of Mid Canterbury farmers and operators using this free recycling service.

Please remember the criteria for recycling chemical containers. Containers must be:

- Plastic, 0-60 litres in size, with lid removed,
- Free from chemical residue and dirt inside and out – triple rinsing is recommended and the container must be well drained, and
- The containers must belong to a participating brand owner.

Meeting your health and safety needs

Farm Safety Training courses, designed to ensure you meet the latest health and safety requirements are being run by ATS in conjunction with Unique Solutions. Course content includes relevant documentation and information on how you can lower your ACC levies. The last training of the year will take place on the 17 November at a cost \$550 (GST and member discount inclusive). Seating is strictly limited. If you would like to know more please call Peter Jacob on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287), or to book a spot on our training courses email book@ats.co.nz or visit www.ats.co.nz/farmsafety.

Bulk Fuel Deliveries

On farm delivery of fuel can save you time and money, and with Ruralco you can save up to 20 cents off per litre* of fuel, with access to Allied Petroleum and NPD (Nelson Petroleum Distributors Ltd). To set up bulk fuel deliveries to your business, contact Ruralco on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256) and quote your Ruralco number. This can be found on the bottom right corner of your Ruralco Card.

**No volume limits. Discount as at 1 August 2015. Discount is GST inclusive and may vary depending on pump pricing, conditions apply. Refer to the Ruralco website for latest pricing, updated weekly.*



Mitre 10

Did you know Mitre 10 and Mitre 10 Mega now accept the Ruralco Card across the South Island?

Visit any South Island Mitre 10 store and use your Ruralco Card to save up to 10%.



When was your last electricity reading?

As we are in the busy irrigation season, please check your electricity accounts to see when you had the last actual reading on your connection. This is important to ensure you are getting accurate accounts. Also remember, if you have turned off your mains during the winter, check they are back on so your smart meter reading can be obtained. For any queries, please contact ATS Energy Account Manager Tracey Gordon on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

Expanding the Ruralco fuel network

We have been busy growing our fuel network; this means at Allied fuel stops across the country you can now use your Ruralco Card.

Have an Allied fuel stop near you? Look for the Ruralco acceptance signage or check the Ruralco Fuel directory or Ruralco Website to see whether you can use your Ruralco Card or Ruralco Mobilcard at this site and save 12¢ per litre off fuel every day.

To get your own copy of the Ruralco Fuel Directory contact us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

Terms and conditions apply.



Visit us at the Ashburton A&P Show

30–31 October 2015

ATS and Ruralco invite you to join us at the Ashburton A&P Show on 30–31 August at the Ashburton Showgrounds. The Ashburton Show is the perfect family outing with lots of things to see and do, you'll find a variety of technology, animals, home industries, shearing, dog trials as well as a range of food and trade stalls. Gates open at 9am on both days and entry is \$10, with children aged 12 and under free. Visit the ATS/Ruralco marquee at site 801, swipe your Ruralco Card for lunch on us. Plus grab a drink and relax, you'll have the best view of the show ring.



ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge

29 November 2015

Are you up for a challenge? Are you up for the ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge? Experience the spectacular Mid Canterbury coastline at Longbeach Estate and join the community with a run, bike or walk. There are a range of races for different ages and abilities. Entry is now open, visit www.longbeachcoastalchallenge.com/enter to enter online.

Check out our Facebook page



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

Are you equipped for the whitebait season?

The Whitebait season is open between 15 August & 30 November for all of New Zealand, excluding the West Coast of the South Island which is open between 1 September & 14 November. With whitebaiting permitted between 6.00am and 9.00pm. There are a range of Ruralco suppliers who will get you equipped with nets, screens or lines and you'll receive a discount too.

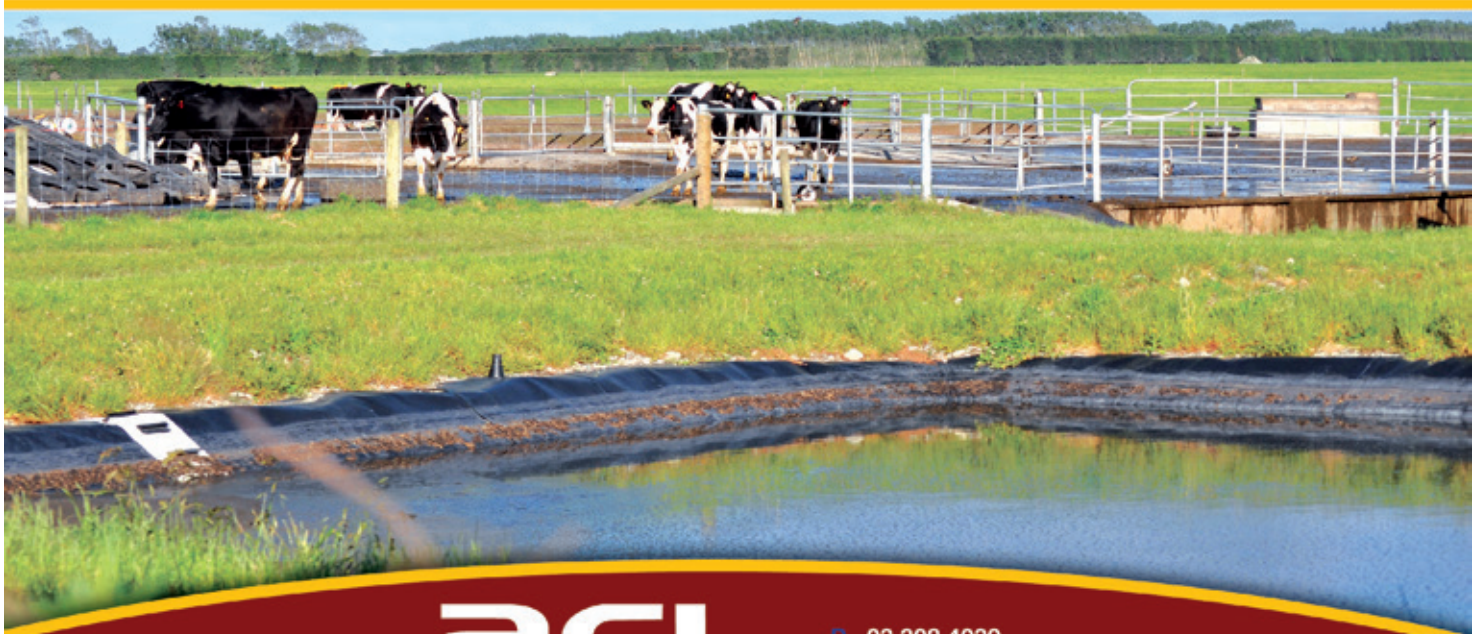
Check out our supplier directory at www.ruralco.co.nz to find a business near you.



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*No volume limits. Discount current as at 1 September 2015, and is subject to change. Not available at convenience stations or in conjunction with other discounts or offers.