

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2014

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY



Mill commits to
arable future

Family creates
new coast legend

Industry wrap up

The perfect ham

Trusted co-ops working for farmers

ATS

Ravensdown

From the CEO



This edition of Real Farmer marks the end of yet another busy year for the co-operative, not only celebrating 50 years of the business since the incorporation of the

Ashburton Trading Society in 1963, but the beginning of an exciting new era with the launch of Ruralco last July in partnership with Ravensdown.

Our cover story explores the success of dairy farmers Dale and Stacey Straight, who together with Dale's brother Kerry, have converted properties at Whataroa and Fox on the West Coast finding ways to overcome the rough land, isolation and five metres of rain annually. Originally from Karamea, Dale and Stacey dairy farmed in Canterbury for many years before returning to their native West Coast to get ahead.

Also in this edition, key industry faces share their comments and predictions for the coming year. We also catch up on progress at Timaru's Farmers Mill, which was opened in May by a number of farmers whom farm in the region, making a welcome addition to the value chain for the region's arable sector.

Articles on thiamine deficiency in ruminants, energy savings in the dairy shed and low potassium in crops, feature in the regular sections, while there is also a piece looking at farming in Tasmania as well as the low down on sourcing the perfect ham, plus much more.

As 2013 draws to a close and we get ready to welcome the New Year, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy and safe festive season, and we look forward to working with you in 2014.

Neal Shaw, Group Chief Executive

Upcoming Events

25 December
Christmas Day

26 December
Boxing Day

1 January
New Year's Day

2 January
Day after New Year's Day

Industry Events

10 December
Dairy NZ Farm Systems Group Westerfield: For more information contact Natalia Benquet on 021 2877 059 or natalia.benquet@dairynz.co.nz

18 December
Mid Canterbury Biz Start
For more information contact Natalia Benquet on 021 2877 059 or natalia.benquet@dairynz.co.nz



12



Contents

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FRONT PAGE PHOTO

The Straights on their Whataroa Farm



Features

- 2** Family creates new coast legend
- 12** Industry wrap up
- 18** Mill commits to arable future
- 36** The perfect ham

Regulars

- 7** Make Ruralco a New Year resolution
- 11** Big savings possible in the dairy shed
- 21** Thiamine deficiency in ruminants
- 33** A farming view from Tasmania
- 41** Where there's muck, there's money

Profiles

- 9** Tuning your batteries since 1934
Newlands
- 15** Living the lifestyle
Lifestyle Motorhomes
- 23** Natural feed for a healthy life
The Feed Shack
- 26** Regional Focus
Introducing Oamaru
- 43** Knowing your cows like never before
Tru-Test
- 45** Goliath forage rape a late autumn/winter feed option
PGG Wrightson Seeds

More

- 47** Ruralco Kids
- 50** Co-op News
- 51** Out and about
- 53** Classifieds



Family creates new coast legend

West Coast dairying is a different type of graft. In some cases rough land, boggy or rocky soil and scrub, isolation and up to five metres of rain annually means conversions, and the day to day farming to recoup the investment and getting ahead is not for the faint hearted.

BY TIM BREWSTER



After two dairy conversions on properties in Whataroa and Fox Glacier, the husband and wife team of Dale and Stacey Straight and Dale's brother Kerry seem to have found the right blend of a commitment to hard work, intelligent farming decisions and a considered approach to risk.

Seeing the potential in land and following through with the improvements has been a major part of that success.

"We were brought up on a rough farm in Karamea that our parents were constantly working hard at developing so land development is second nature to us. For me developing land is the main motivation, farming is second," Kerry said.

Stacey and Dale are now in their ninth season on the Whataroa farm which has now grown to 430 effective hectares and milking 1,100 cows. With Kerry in his fifth season milking 1,000 cows on a farm he helped convert just south of Fox Glacier. The three became the only partners in the two properties last winter, buying out the other half of the Fox property.

"Dale and Kerry were literally born into dairying on the family farm that had been established by their grandfather."

"With the farm in Fox, we've managed to make it all happen. We've only just started paying ourselves more than our staff. It seems once we get financially comfortable we stretch ourselves again," Dale said. "Now we've just got to knuckle down and get into it."

Stacey and Dale had already been knuckling down for years on the land since leaving their home town of Karamea and heading to Canterbury in the mid 1990's. After a season in a farm management role in Methven the two got offered a 50-50 sharemilking position on that farm and Dale, then 25 and Stacey managed to "squirrel away enough for a herd of 430 cows" over three years. Next was a move to Fairlie to another 50-50 job, "the land just had a shed in the middle and not a fence on it," Dale recalls. Five years on, Dale and his older brother Kerry were roaming the West coast looking for a potential dairy property.



Dale and Kerry were literally born into dairying on the family farm that had been established by their grandfather.

The two brothers had taken separate paths after leaving the family farm and school. With Dale going straight onto the land, Kerry headed over the pass to complete a Bachelor in Agricultural Science at Lincoln, and started a 15 year career as a farm consultant specialising in dairy production in the tropics, and eventually working for Lincoln International, the international consultancy firm owned by the university.

Along with projects in Sri Lanka and other parts of South East Asia and the Pacific, Kerry also completed a Master of Applied Science (International Rural Development) in 1998.

In 2002 he decided to return to his native West Coast and farming and joined forces with Dale and Stacey. Along with some family assistance they started their search for their first conversion project.

While Dale was head down calving cows one spring he asked Kerry to go over to Whataroa to check out a beef farm that might be a conversion possibility. Initial impression of the property was that it had been a wasted trip. However, after a full weekend of wandering about through scrub, willows, swamp, rushes, some pasture and a few bits of bush he decided that it was worth further

ABOVE: Cows at the Whataroa farm

BELOW: Kerry Straight on the Fox Glacier farm

OPPOSITE: Kerry, Dale and Stacey Straight

consideration and eventually the decision was made and deal done.

After getting title just before Christmas the two brothers started an intensive six month conversion with Kerry fulltime and Dale doing week on week off, travelling from Fairlie.

"There was a lot of bush and scrub. The biggest challenge was land development with two 20 tonne diggers for nine months. It wasn't like a Canterbury conversion where you just spray and drill," Dale said. Paddocks were cleared and contoured to enable runoff in heavy rain, and a network of drains lowered the water table. A tonne of super and five tonnes of lime were applied per hectare, followed by another half-tonne of super prior to their first milking season.

"The West Coast dairy experience was quite different from the tidy checkerboard plains of Canterbury..."

They managed to get 150 hectares ready and grassed that summer and a 60 bale rotary shed up and running. By the middle of the year Dale and Stacey moved over, bringing their cows with them for their first milking season with 650 cows on 275 hectares.

The West Coast dairy experience was quite different from the tidy checkerboard plains of Canterbury with contractors and services just a quick phone call away.

"You have to do everything yourself. Contractors are very limited. You get a fine day and call them to find out your already fifth in line. We spread all our fertilisers and do all our cultivation," Dale said. Any bulk supplies brought over from Canterbury cost \$55 a tonne in cartage which also adds to the cost. "You've got to be a jack of all trades and fix stuff if you have to. The engineers not always here."



The amount of rainfall means weather dictates much of their day to day work, affecting stock and recently meaning they had to fly urea onto most of the farm because it was too boggy to drive on. In October alone the area had 22 rain days resulting in almost 700mm just for the month, almost a year's worth for much of Canterbury. Contouring the land to enable runoff was a crucial aspect of the conversion and accounted for a lot of unforeseen digger hours. Spraying effluent onto paddocks can be a "nightmare" with heavy rain.

He said the biggest changes for dairying from his point of view was the need for more stringent environmental controls. "Effluent is our biggest footprint. It takes a lot of managing."

"It's a very good community here, absolutely tremendous and on the coast generally."

The rainfall also means the Straights fertilise more often in smaller amounts for it to be effective. "The cows struggle with rain," Dale said. They use a smaller crossbred Friesian and milk once a day with an annual yield average of 320kg of milk solids a head compared to 430kg in Canterbury.

And the upside? "Cheap land, and cheap shares in the dairy company," Dale said.

He considers the profitability is as good as anywhere in the country with a significantly

lower capital outlay without a need for irrigation. Both farms are grass only so there is no imported feed adding to costs.

The Westland Dairy Company processing plant in Hokitika is 100km from Whataroa so transporting milk is not an issue and the company shares are only \$1.50, compared to Fonterra's recent \$7 price.

"It's a very good community here, absolutely tremendous, and on the coast generally. Smaller towns, Whataroa, Fox, Harihari, are all pretty special places. Easy to slip into."

"We bypassed the system because we were already coasters," Stacey said with a laugh. South Westland has other benefits too, "there's not many places you can shoot a deer from your

backyard." A herd of about 18 deer appeared soon after they arrived "it has thinned out a bit since then," Dale said.

Labour can be difficult in the area with farmers keen to get families to help bolster the school role and add to the community.

"More often than not the husbands are happy to come over, it's just convincing the wives," Stacey said. Generally if two candidates with equal qualities apply for a job in the area, the one with a family usually gets chosen she said.

The Whataroa farm has three fulltime staff and some part-time help doing the milking with an 11 day on 3 day off rotation. Dale does three days milking and he and Stacey have had a busy calving season since August with 350





ABOVE: Kerry, Dale and Stacey Straight at the Whataroa Farm

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Cows grazing at the Fox Glacier farm

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: The spectacular scenery on the Fox Glacier farm

to feed. Dale also does the majority of tractor work, fertilising and managing feed. As the self-described 'gofer' Stacey does much of the calf rearing, and is hands-on when staff are off.

At some point the two brothers were driving through Fox Glacier and noticed some green pasture that disappeared into rushes and scrub. "We thought if it looked like that by the road, then why couldn't the rest of it too? With a bit of work," Kerry said. Little did they realise that a few years later it would be them doing that work.

"The farm is now into its fifth season milking 1010 cows on 395 effective hectares."

Five years ago, the Straights embarked on another project as 50% shareholders in a partnership converting this 412 hectare beef and sheep farm in Fox Glacier.

Over an 18-month period Kerry tackled the property. "The Fox farm is old glacial riverbed

and unlike anything we had tackled in the past," Kerry said. It was rough; there was a huge amount of guess work at the outset with the challenges of identifying the best methods for developing the various types of terrain and then the challenges of keeping machinery working in tough conditions. "There were huge gambles on what would work and what it would cost."

As well as the development of pastures from scrub, bush, swamp, rushes and stony riverbeds there was also the total re-fencing, stock lane and access road construction, installation of stock water supply, installing power supply lines and building houses, calf rearing sheds and a 60 bale rotary milking shed. The farm is now into its fifth season milking 1010 cows on 395 effective hectares.

The Straight's are modest about their efforts but their contribution to the dairy industry on the West Coast with their farming practices and conversions is anything but.

"As hard working, progressive farmers they are a great example of what can be achieved on the West Coast by adapting systems to make the most of it. They recognise potential," director of Westland Dairy products Kirsty Robertson said.

The project in Fox also caused interest in the industry, but since it was completed, it has been recognised a worthwhile project: "Kerry is a progressive farmer who prefers to do things right and do it once. Starting a dairy farm in the Fox was a big challenge. It has traditionally been a beef area and is the last dairy farm on the map going south. He had to convince the board that it was worthwhile to pick up milk so far south. He has not disappointed," Chris Pullen, Environmental Manager of Westland Milk Products said.

"The Fox farm is old glacial riverbed and unlike anything we had tackled in the past."

Last winter the Straights bought out the original partners of the Fox farm and added another 120 hectares to the Whataroa property last year.

When asked what the plans for the future were, Dale's response replicates what many dairy farmers must think when they set out on their daily chores—"get rid of debt."

He said the costs aren't as high as setting up a dairy operation in Canterbury but they are still "pretty big numbers."

It doesn't keep them awake at night though. "If it did it wouldn't be worth doing it," Stacey said. "We're confident enough in our abilities and our budgeting to know we can handle it," Dale said. "We did well sharemilking, thanks in part to getting onto a couple of good farms owned by some great people".

Kerry is adamant Dale is definitely the better farmer of the two. "He's very practical, is a great stockman and plans very well. I may be able to turn out a spreadsheet quicker but that's all."

What both brothers share which could be a cornerstone of their success so far is a vision for the potential of land others might shy away from.

"We got given an opportunity in Methven. It would be nice to repay the favour."

"Dairying is very important to West Coast. Hokitika would be a ghost town without the dairy company," Dale said.

In the long term, Dale and Stacey aim to have sharemilkers on the farm who want to take the next step in their dairy career. "We got given an opportunity in Methven. It would be nice to repay the favour."

"It's a bloody good career. You work hard but you have opportunities to do well. There are not many jobs out there where you can be 30 with a million dollars in your back pocket."



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Check out www.ruralco.co.nz for updated locations and pricing.

*The 9¢ is the current discount as at 1 December 2013 and may be subject to change.
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-ATS- 

Make Ruralco a New Year resolution

The Ruralco Card is almost six months into its first year of existence. For ATS members it's been very much business as usual but with greater benefits as the card can be used outside of the immediate Mid Canterbury region.

NEAL SHAW, GROUP CEO

The Ruralco Card can also be used at approximately 330 Mobil service stations throughout the country and you can secure a 9 cent per litre discount with no conditions, such as maximum volume purchases.

For Ravensdown shareholders, the concept is very simple. You now have a card you can use that supports your co-operative in being able to offer a convenient billing system for all of your farming and non-farming purchases. Along with your invoices being attached to one main account, you receive discounts at point of sale through many Ruralco Suppliers and you back a concept that focuses on supporting your local community.

Ruralco represents a modern solution for growing our respective co-operative businesses, without the need for any messy and expensive takeovers or acquisitions or over capitalised investment in bricks and mortar to achieve that growth.

Ruralco is a genuine joint venture business intended to grow the strength and presence of both co-operatives at a national level. We already have a number of national companies listed as approved suppliers accepting the Ruralco Card. These operators are provided with support in promoting the card's use in-store, and they offer discounts or deals specific to Ruralco Cardholders.

Each co-operative brings its own strengths to the Ruralco Card. ATS has developed a strong background in card management services, thanks to our staffs' experience with the Ruralco predecessor, the ATS Card.

Ravensdown provides a national database of shareholders who are eligible for a Ruralco Card, greatly expanding the catchment and depth of the cardholder base. Thanks to this partnership, the membership will total 20,000 once Ruralco has been rolled out nationally.

Such a strong cardholder base ensures Ruralco is able to secure some of the best deals possible, leveraging that scale to help keep farm costs down and extract valuable deals for cardholders.

This ability extends to one of the most important farm purchases, fuel. Ruralco has built a strong ongoing relationship with Allied Fuel for bulk fuel delivery, and with Mobil service stations for card use at any station around the country.

For cardholders with multiple farm businesses across both islands, Ruralco offers an ideal single

billing solution to fuel and supply purchases in an easily understood monthly invoiced format.

The Ruralco Card is focused on the needs of Ravensdown and ATS shareholders and also supports the needs of farming families by offering a broad range of card supplier outlets.

“Such a strong cardholder base ensures Ruralco is able to secure some of the best deals possible”

Typical farm needs like vet services and hardware are among suppliers, but outlets as varied as accommodation services and fitness centres are also part of the network.

It is possible to refuel your tractor in the morning, fill up your car on your holiday journey in the afternoon, pay for a motel that evening and buy a meal for the family, all charged through the Ruralco Card.

Over coming weeks and months, the Ruralco team are working hard to expand the network of suppliers accepting the card.

Ruralco has been busy recruiting a team of Partnership Services Representatives to push up the number of businesses available to cardholders to use, both locally and nationally. This includes the recent appointment of account managers in the Otago-Southland and Nelson-Marlborough regions, others will be put in place throughout the rest of the country. We already have a growing list of businesses and companies eager to be part of the Ruralco Supplier network and we aim to ensure they remain as relevant and appealing as possible to our farmer shareholders.

If you would like to know more about Ruralco and what we can do for you, your family and your business, do not hesitate to visit us at www.ruralco.co.nz or call us on 0800 RURALNZ (787 256).

BELOW: Neal Shaw, Group CEO





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Tuning your batteries since 1934

What is that warning light on my dash? Why does my vehicle click when I try to start it? Why is the air con blowing warm? Why does the indicator flash faster on one side? My vehicle is very slow to start. What's wrong? BY LINDA CLARKE

If you've asked yourself any of these questions lately, then it's time for your vehicle to have an auto electrical check up, and that's an easy job for Newlands Auto Electric and Power Tool Centre.

The Ashburton-based company has workshops in Rolleston and Ashburton and offers free battery checks. Experienced staff simply run their diagnostic machines over the battery and repair or re-charge them as necessary. Newlands can supply and install batteries for private vehicles as well as farm vehicles and commercial trucks, with the Optima heavy duty battery well suited to agricultural vehicles such as tractors, trucks and heavy farm and industrial machinery.

The family-owned business has been in the auto electrical and battery service trade since 1934. Its new Rolleston branch is a state-of-the-art workshop and retail store, with the ability to custom make electrical harness ideas for any purpose.

The new building has space for heavy vehicles but also room for the general public, who might need to call in for quick service on small jobs such as changing a bulb or the like.

Three qualified service technicians and knowledgeable sales staff work from the purpose-built Rolleston base on Jones Road—ideally located for commercial and industrial growth taking place at the nearby iZone, as well as the fast-growing Rolleston town and wider Selwyn district.

They are backed up by a big team working from the Ashburton headquarters, where managing director Robert Newlands is the third generation family member in charge. The business was started nearly 80 years ago by his grandfather Bill Newlands, in a small store in Tancred Street. In 1967 Robert's father John took over and the business continued to grow, moving to purpose-built premises in Kermod Street in 1967.

Robert took the helm in 2000, determined to continue Newlands' reputation as an industry leader, and maintaining the high standards set by his father and grandfather.

Over the decades, Newlands has responded to the changing and increasingly technical needs of customers. The growing use of air conditioning units in vehicles, and communication devices like GPS and vehicle tracking systems, cellphones and radios, means staff are up to speed recommending, installing and servicing state-of-the-art products.

Quality and customer service is important, and the company can also provide customised solutions to clients, with a specialised team



ABOVE: Newlands Service truck on site
MAIN IMAGE: Rolleston Newlands Branch

that designs and manufactures electrical components and systems where needed. In addition to their expertise with cars, motorcycles and scooters, the sheer volume and variety of vehicles that pass through the Newlands workshops ensures that the technicians share a huge amount of technical knowledge and experience with trucks, agricultural vehicles and heavy machinery.

Their long relationships with supplier's means follow-on benefits for customers, with good deals passed on from many suppliers, including large firms such as Hella NZ, Eroad, GME, Century Yuasa Batteries.

"A lot of our work is commercial, but we repair and service across the board," Robert says. "If you can fix a truck or a tractor, repairing a car is not that difficult and we have excellent automotive technicians who can take on any job."

The company has also become a power tool centre, selling quality power tools and workshop machinery from well-known brands including Makita, Hitachi and Bosch.



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OCTOBER 2013

Big savings possible in the dairy shed.

Dairy farms account for almost three percent of New Zealand's total electricity use and have been highlighted as an area where some major savings can be made in relatively low cost ways. BY RICHARD RENNIE

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) has made it a focus to improve dairy farm energy efficiency, after conducting an electricity use audit across 150 dairy farms in the 2009–2010 season.

The comprehensive audit was commissioned by (then) MAF, conducted by EECA and included Fonterra, covering farms from the Waikato to Otago-Southland for the season.

All areas of consumption were covered including water heating, vacuum pumping, water cooling, vat cooling, and irrigation-effluent systems.

The numbers from the audit have put some real perspective around just how great the consumption and potential savings can be to the electrically intensive business of dairying.

Projections from the audit estimated dairy sheds use 74,000kWh on average. Add in irrigation and that figure is pushed up to 112,000kWh.

On dairy farms, water heating consumes the majority of electricity, accounting for 24%; water pumping comes next at 22%; refrigeration at 17%; and vacuum pumping at 15%.

From the audit it was estimated that with the right encouragement a minimum of 10% savings in NZ dairy shed electricity consumption was possible, and farmers would be interested if the payback period on energy saving equipment like heat exchangers was three years or less.

The bulk of farmers are missing out on the potential savings, with only 23% of dairy farm nationally having heat recovery equipment installed. However, over 70% of dairy farms are well set up to have such equipment installed relatively easily.

Last spring, EECA kicked off a scheme to get 40 dairy farms nationwide on board installing heat recovery equipment capable of transferring heat generated by cooling systems, to use to heat water. The scheme aims to run for two years.

Grants were offered across four installers, including two that operate in the Canterbury region. These grants covered up to a quarter of the typical new installation cost for heat recovery equipment, or a third of the cost of retrofitted equipment. For large dairies typical of Canterbury farms, the cost for such equipment can be up to \$20,000.

One year on, dairy farm Project Manager, Kirk Archibald, says the scheme attracted 28 dairy farms to it, including four in Canterbury.

EECA aims to publish the first results of the savings made before year's end. However, anecdotally Kirk says the outcome is looking very positive.



"So far the data is in line with the savings we expected. Depending if a farm has irrigation or not, there are savings of 10–25% to be made, with non-irrigated farms saving up to 33%, by having heat exchangers installed."

With an average installation cost for heat recovery equipment of \$13,000 and average savings of \$4,000 a year, farmers are almost seeing their preferred three year payback period being achieved with the equipment.

"So when you add in the EECA grant that brings the cost down to \$9,000 for installation, you are only looking at close to a two year payback which is very positive."

Another area of potential energy efficiency EECA is working on is around dairy vacuum pumping systems which account for 15% of electricity use. Installing variable speed drives has proven to deliver savings of \$1,500 a year in smaller dairies. "If someone is doing a heat recovery install, EECA can generally bundle support for the variable speed drive, particularly if it is a larger sized farm operation, given the capital outlay on a variable speed drive component."

Another area of potential savings is applying the variable drives to other pumping systems, including effluent and irrigation pumps.

Combining the variable drives with heat recovery equipment has the potential to haul a healthy 33%

out of a larger farm's electricity bill, and the savings need not always stop there.

Kirk points to farms with vat insulation wrapping also being able to save a further 3–5% on electricity use. The EECA audit revealed a disparity between the North and South Island in vat insulation, with 25% in the North Island wrapped compared to only 5% in the South Island. Work is also being done on how significantly wrapping affects the chilling time of milk.

EECA's grants have been left open to service providers on the proviso savings can be guaranteed, and there is potential for grants to support other energy saving initiatives like solar heating for dairy water.

ATS Energy, Account Manager Tracey Gordon can help arrange for a full farm electricity audit to be conducted, and identify key areas for savings alongside energy providers EECA also provides the template for a business energy management programme that can be easily adopted into a farm system, to learn more visit: www.ats.co.nz/atsenergy ATS Energy is exclusive to ATS members.



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Industry wrap up

A number of key industry faces have provided their overview of 2013 and their comments and predictions for the coming year.



Federated Farmers looks forward

BRUCE WILLIS, PRESIDENT FEDERATED FARMERS

2013 has seen much work on important policy areas. The new sustainable dairy water accord and a proposed new framework for freshwater management are about redefining our entire water discussion. Federated Farmers work has directly contributed towards the retention of Rural Post and we have secured a good number of other policy wins as well.

Having recently returned from Geneva and a WTO open forum, in my view, the mood around free trade is finally moving in New Zealand's direction. A combination of food security, climate and international security is giving impetus to efficient primary producers like New Zealand.

In a year typified by drought, Federated Farmers' biggest area of work remains water policy where we are working hard to ensure farmers' views are heard and that water outcomes are sensible for farming, the environment and our country's economy. 2013 has also witnessed some key changes of leadership positions. The Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation and Landcorp all have new CEO's. Alliance has a new Chair while Silver Fern Farms will soon have one too.

From a testing climatic year many of us ironically now have one of the best winter/spring grass growth periods of recent times. Given TPP negotiations, the outlook for the next 12 months is increasingly positive as this season looks like being a good one for farming and the wider economy.

Federated Farmers achieves significant gains for its farming members through a strong collective voice, if you want to add your voice, please call 0800 3237 646.



Difficult season, but favourable times in dairy

JOHN LUXTON, CHAIRMAN DAIRY NZ

Looking back over 2012/13, I am reminded that New Zealand dairy farming remains one of the most dynamic and progressive pastoral and dairying sectors in the world. We are an industry that cares for the land, produces the goods, drives local economies and delivers as the largest dairy exporter in the world.

We continue to respond to our market signals requiring assurance around food product quality, animal welfare, employment and our environmental impact.

The markets have a way of compensating difficult seasons with more favourable times. With world dairy demand currently exceeding supply, there is an opportunity for our industry to consolidate and reduce overall farm debt, to catch up on deferred maintenance and to upgrade where necessary. At the same time we need to continue to focus on the cost of producing our milk. We must remain competitive and responsible to have a future.

DairyNZ Chairman John Luxton says positive forecasts are welcome but he does not expect farmers to ease up the caution on budgets. With a record milk price forecast for the current season, Dairy NZ's "where the money goes" calculations also show that 19% of cash income will be available for capital developments such as environmental upgrades, debt reduction, and investments such as purchasing additional Fonterra shares. Just over half the average farm's income in the 2013-14 season will be spent on farm working expenses with the "big three" of feed, wages and fertiliser comprising half those expenses, according to the latest calculations by DairyNZ's economics team.



Sheep and beef on the up

DR SCOTT CHAMPION, CHIEF EXECUTIVE BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND

The Beef + Lamb New Zealand's Economic Service says the 2013/14 year will be a much better one for sheep and beef farmers with average profit before tax up 21 per cent because of better lamb and beef prices. This will take average farm profit before tax incomes to just over \$100,000.

The effects of last season's widespread drought are lingering, as we expected. The drought has impacted on this season's stock numbers—particularly lambs—which will be down by a million head. A mild winter and good start to the spring have been positive for lamb survival. Sheep numbers for the year to 30 June 2013 decreased 1 per cent to 30.9 million. Cattle numbers were also back 1.3 per cent to 3.7 million head.

So while lamb and beef exports will be down this season, prices are expected to lift, boosting farmer incomes.

Of New Zealand's international markets, there has been substantial growth in demand from China for New Zealand beef and sheepmeat. The EU continues to be a valuable sheepmeat market for us even though recession persists in the Euro zone. Economic growth of around 2 per cent is forecast in the US as business activity improves and that's positive given 52 per cent of beef by volume goes to North America. While not showing the same levels of growth as China, other North Asian beef markets (Japan, Korea and Taiwan) continue to be important for New Zealand beef farmers.



Arable season in review

NICK PYKE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE FAR

We are now well into the next growing season and can reflect on some key points from the last year.

Last season was generally a good year with regard to both yield and quality for most Canterbury growers for both grain and seed. With the availability of irrigation for many growers the ability to maximise light interception and convert this energy to seed is improved and growers can maximise yield. However, this increased reliance on irrigation does mean the issues of water and nutrients are increasingly important.

Growers will come under increasing scrutiny from regional councils with regard to nutrients limits and, as outputs cannot be measured, the emphasis has been on how Overseer could be used to model these nutrient outputs. There has been concern that Overseer cannot accurately model arable farm and irrigated farm systems so a review process was undertaken this year to identify what was needed to ensure the model was effective for cropping farms. This review has identified a number of improvements that are required and work is underway to ensure, if it is used, that it is effective.

A review of stubble burning was also undertaken by FAR for the regional council. This review clearly showed the benefits of burning with regard to reduced use of agrichemicals and energy in crop establishment. It also highlighted how effective stubble burning is when establishing small seed crops.

Although there are many factors that are important to growers, both yield and new products are very important. The 20 tonnes by 2020 programme for wheat has achieved a yield of just under 17 tonnes which is a very acceptable yield at this early stage of the project. With regard to value, last year saw the release of Avanex grass, the outcome of some innovative research in New Zealand on bird management to reduce bird strike.

A good year requires good growers, favourable weather and good markets. Hopefully the current season will deliver these ingredients.



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Living the lifestyle

Murray McPherson has fond memories of camping with his parents and holidaying with his in-laws in their old Zephyr caravan. BY LINDA CLARKE

The Lifestyle Motorhomes business he and wife Margaret now run is helping families create their own great getaways and making dreams come true. The Ashburton business is a specialist in its field, known the length of the country in the caravan and motorhome community for its professional work. They can design and build a luxurious motorhome for permanent living, refurbish smaller caravans and campers and custom build trailers for specific needs.

Murray, an electrician, started Lifestyle Motorhomes in 2001 building on experience from his company in the electrical retail trade (Quinmac

Lifestyle Motorhome vehicles are built to withstand that UV sun, but caravans and campervans imported from Australia, the United States and other countries just can't cope, they require some protection. The roof, which often accommodates vents, TV aerials, solar panels and other extras, becomes a place for water to infiltrate then rust or rot sets in. EPDM rubber roofs also perish in our high UV environment. Murray and his team can help though, with a water proofing membrane the company designed in conjunction with a New Zealand chemist/scientist in 2011. The Titan Roof

Murray and Marg see themselves in a Lifestyle Motorhome when they feel they can retire from the business they love. Several times now they have started the process of design and building the motor home of their dreams, but sold it to a smitten customer.

The features of these top-end homes are equal to any conventional home, with gas oven & hob, fridge freezer, pull out pantry, computer nook, full bathroom with a separate shower & toilet, one or two bedrooms, lounge, dining, TV's and BBQ to name a few. A special feature is the slide-out, which at the push of a button, extends the



Electrical in the Allenton Shopping Centre) and then Murray McPherson Electrical where he first contracted to Designline, which was thinking about developing a range of motorhomes alongside its transport buses.

Led by customer demand, in the early days the business was in the market of manufacturing top-end motorhomes for those that could afford it wanting to travel the country for a couple of years in self-contained luxury. The Kyoto Protocol and global financial downturn had a big impact on that market, but Lifestyle Motorhomes has reinvented itself, catering for a wider market – still making big motorhomes, but now offering rebuild and repair work for all manner of mobile homes and recreational vehicles.

In its huge workshops on the corner of Dobson Street and Chalmers Avenue in Ashburton, sit bus-sized motorhomes, caravans, camper vans, 5th Wheelers and specialist trailers in various stages of construction or repair.

Murray says motorhomes in New Zealand have to withstand brutal weather conditions, as they spend most of their time on the road and exposed to the elements. The biggest problem is leaking, usually caused when external sealing perishes in our harsh UV light and lets in rain.

Protection Membrane prevents and cures leaks and can be used on caravans, campervans, fifth wheelers, motorhomes and horse floats. It insulates, offers protection from the UV light, is waterproof, rust proof plus expands and contracts to suite all forms of material which you find on the roofs of motor homes.

"We did a lot of research on what people wanted. We found around 80 per cent of repairs are to do with water damage, so we wanted to find a preventive and less expensive way to protect people's assets."

The Titan formula is a process painted onto exposed surfaces and forms a membrane. It comes with a 10-year guarantee and Lifestyle Motorhomes is the only certified applicator in the country.

Murray said there were always challenges in the trade and being innovative was key to the business' resilience in the industry, where it had a long-standing reputation for quality. Testament to that are the constant cards, notes and emails from happy campers. A new website is about to be launched and has all the details of their service range.



ABOVE: Margaret and Murray McPherson
MAIN IMAGE: A lifestyle Motorhome

width of the motor home by nearly a metre. Murray said the current trend for mobile homes was a desire by their owners to be off the grid and not reliant on external power sources, so custom design electrical systems with solar energy is used extensively and is a great cost saver, meaning you can park up at the most remote and beautiful spots on earth and enjoy your new lifestyle.



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Mill commmits to arable future

A commitment by Canterbury arable farmers to their industry, from the paddock to the plate, has enjoyed a strong start with the commissioning of the Farmers Mill in Timaru.

BY RICHARD RENNIE

Opened with Prime Ministerial endorsement in May, the mill has made a welcome addition to the value chain for the region's arable sector.

The \$10 million mill investment is backed by 14 investors, of whom 12 are arable farming families in the region. Manager Grant Bunting believes the decision to go ahead with the mill came at a time when many farmers and flour buyers alike were frustrated at the lack of supply alternatives available.

While Farmers Mill obviously still has to meet the market for grain prices offered to its farmer suppliers, its location provides an appealing option, particularly for growers passionate about having their grain processed by a 100% locally owned operation.

If location is a bonus for local growers, the mill's 40,000t a year processing capacity makes it an appealing processing option for companies seeking specialty flours or short production runs. The mill's founding client has been Griffins, requiring a consistent supply of quality soft wheat flour for biscuit making. A much celebrated figure touted at the mill's opening was that its first year production of 28,000t would produce enough flour to make seven billion Chocolate Chip cookies, enough for everyone on the planet.



Farmers Mill has since grown its client base to include some of the country's most highly regarded bakery operations, including Coupland's Bakeries, Baker Boys, The French Bakery, Rangiora Bakery, Bakers Beyond and Colonial Bakery.

"We have enjoyed a great reception from throughout the region and into Otago and the West Coast, clients have been keen to see a new local company succeed," says Grant.

Traceability is an option the mill can offer those customers, and while not yet in demand, it provides customers with the means to identify the source of wheat down to the farm and even the paddock it came from.

The \$10 million investment in the mill has bought state of the art processing technology and was constructed in a record 10 month period.

The high tech equipment means at present only ten people are employed at the plant, with that possibly going up by two when the mill gets to three shifts a day. Despite the small number, staff



are a tight crew, intensely proud of their role in the operation says Grant.

The focus on wheat supply is strictly from within New Zealand, and primarily Canterbury. North Island wheat is a considered source, although high freight costs between the islands will erode some of its competitiveness for supply.

“There is definitely a story that could be told there, and one that consumers could appreciate. If you can tell that story you can open up to that traceability capability and branding.”

Farmers Mill chairman Murray Turley says he has been thrilled with the level of support received locally, with “no shortage” of customers keen to come on board with a 100% locally owned and supplied operator.

“We still see a lot of potential in the food service sector, and want to take that further before exploring other options,” he says.

Grant Bunting said there could be potential for a branded locally sourced flour product for retail sale, but this was not on the company's immediate horizon.

“There is definitely a story that could be told there, and one that consumers could appreciate.

ABOVE: Manager Grant Bunting (centre) and his staff
LEFT: The end product

BELOW: The Farmers Mill site

OPPOSITE PAGE: Farmers Mill Machinery

If you can tell that story you can open up to that traceability capability and branding.”

Grant remains confident about Canterbury's ability to continue to supply good high quality grain in sufficient volumes over coming years.

“If you also look at the quality of the grain coming out of Canterbury objectively, the data suggests it is as good as from anywhere, despite some in the past suggesting there is a difference, specifically with premium hard grains out of Australia.

He also views the option of supplying a local mill, fitting well alongside dairying's growth in Canterbury.

“I think having the mill, and dairying's demand for grain in the region means the arable sector stands to benefit from having those options. As long as you are relevant to the market, there will always be a demand for your product.”

At this stage the mill has sufficient shareholders and capacity to enable expansion for some years ahead.

“We still see a lot of potential ahead of us here in New Zealand with our technology and scale meaning we have the flexibility to work closely with customers needing specialty products,” says Grant.



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Thiamine deficiency in ruminants

The changing seasons in New Zealand often bring a new set of animal health challenges and diseases. BY IAN HODGE BVSC., MACVSC. VETENT RIVERSIDE.

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

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

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

Dietary changes can also predispose to thiamine deficiency by causing an imbalance in bacterial populations in the rumen. This often occurs

with high starch intakes commonly seen in summer with lush grass and meal feeding to calves and adult dairy cows. Some plants also produce substances which destroy thiamine. High sulphur levels have been thought to play a role in thiamine deficiency and this is sometimes seen when water sulphate levels in water supplies are too high.

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

In the early stages of the disease, animals with thiamine deficiency will separate themselves and may appear unsteady or blind. They may walk aimlessly and bump into gates and other objects. If left untreated the disease quickly progresses and these animals become aggressive, blind, have muscle tremors and soon are unable to stand. Once down they become more and more rigid, throw their heads back and have fatal seizures if no treatments are given.

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

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

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

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Natural feed for a healthy life

When Miles Ashley and his wife Tracy bought near Oxford, they realised there were no natural stock or pet food establishments in North Canterbury.

BY JONTY WARD

With 55 years of retail experience collectively, a keen interest in animal health, and a small zoo of animals at home, the couple established The Feedshack in Rangiora.

Five years on, Miles says they have the biggest range of fully natural animal and pet health products in Canterbury. "Nowhere else can you find such a variety of products in one place, even the internet is not the same as coming in-store."

Miles and Tracy's main policy is to not sell anything that they won't test or try themselves. Over 4000 product lines have been tested and proven to be up to their standard.

Miles says this has meant there are many common brands that won't come through The Feedshack's doors.

The Feedshack team are very excited to sell Bioblend products, which are entirely NZ made, are very affordable, and cover all animals. Along with locally produced products, overseas products such as Orijen are sourced, which is one of the best cat and dog foods on the international market.

Miles says an entire 'natural first-aid kit' can be compiled at The Feedshack for any animal, whether it is farm stock or pets, rabbits or a bull.

A key focus for Miles and Tracy is for their customers' animals to not just survive, but thrive. "Any animal can survive on budget products, but getting what they can from natural products means they will be at their healthiest."

They stock organic alternatives to drenches, fertilisers and pest control, which Miles says are proving very popular with farmers.

The Feedshack team consists of Miles, Tracy and their son Josh, and also weekend part-timers Josh and Tara. They have a hands-on approach and believe being honest with their customers from day one will keep them coming in the door. "If I can save a customer a dollar by supplying them the right product, instead of 10 products that might do the job, I am happy and I can sleep at night."

Miles says that loyal customers will always keep coming back if you can simply save them money and give good advice.

Many years of experience meant that Miles and Tracy already knew the 'do's and 'don't's of retail



ABOVE: Miles and Tracy Ashley
MAIN IMAGE: The Feedshack in Rangiora

before owning their own shop. Miles says there were many things they always thought they would do differently if they had their own shop, which they have implemented since buying The Feedshack.

Other than farming, The Feedshack's range is never-ending.

Miles and Tracy are proud that The Feedshack has become an exclusive Ruralco Supplier. Miles says he recently had his first Ruralco customer come in, all the way from the West Coast, and when the customer walked out satisfied, he felt great to be offering the service. Miles and Tracy welcome all Ruralco Cardholders to come in and talk about the benefits of organic animal health products, and make the most of the largest range of products in the market.



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The Oamaru business is an approved repairer for all insurance companies and can fix most dents and scrapes, replace windscreens and other auto glass, and offer computerised 3D chassis straightening.

Warren said farmers called on him for panelbeating and painting on vehicles and also for other plastic welding jobs. "We see a lot of farmers when they need plastic welding on farm equipment like calf feeders and tanks."

The panel beating experts have been in the industry for 20 years, and are skilled over a wide range of services including spray painting, glass repair, rust removal and welding for not only farming clients, but all residential and commercial needs.

Riteway also runs a 24-hour salvage and towing service, and supplies and fits towbars. Warren said they are sometimes called to retrieve farm vehicles that have rolled on the district's undulating farmland.

He says it's not only vehicles that need repairs or maintenance, but also buses, boats and caravans.

Repairs and dealing with insurance companies are taken care of as quickly as possible and if auto-electrical work is needed, Warren calls on staff at a neighbouring business he also owns.

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From wool to crops: keeping bugs at bay

David Ludemann's target audience has four legs and wool, and lives in the far corners of the North and Central Otago area.

He has two mobile sheep dipping showers that are about to be called on by farmers wanting to keep fly strike at bay this summer. The busy season is about to begin for the Oamaru contractor and he expects to be on the road as far afield as the Waitaki River, Ranfurly and Waikouaiti, to Duntroon and Maheno – wherever sheep are being farmed.

He took over the sheep dipping business from his father, who started it in 1967, so has plenty of experience recommending products.

David also runs a spray truck, applying chemicals to cereal crops and pasture, or spraying for regassing. Spring is a busy time and he calls on the help of two part-timers to meet important deadlines for farmers.

He has also just begun to apply liquid fertiliser and is hoping to grow this side of the business as increasing numbers of farmers look for more biological solutions to increase production.

"We are just starting to get into this and hope farmers will ring us to inquire about it."

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Keeping the current flowing

Shane Carter's team of qualified plumbers and drainlayers at Laser Plumbing clock up the kilometres as they travel to farming clients from South Canterbury through the Waitaki to Kurow and Palmerston.

"We do anything, anywhere, especially for our farming community," Shane says. With dairying booming in North Otago over the past five years, Laser has been busy in new dairy sheds installing wash down pumps, drainage and water reticulation systems. There has also been plenty of household plumbing on dairy workers' new cottages.

The Laser team includes seven plumbers, one drainlayer and two trade assistants and Shane says all are qualified in the trade. "We are big on credibility so we are prepared to train well and that gives customers confidence."

As well as new work, the Laser team carries out regular servicing and maintenance work, and can respond to emergencies at any time of the day or night.

Shane said Ruralco Cardholders were privy to special deals, as well as knowing they had access to qualified, experience and enthusiastic specialists.

Laser Plumbing services also include commercial, industrial, heating and hotwater systems, pumps, tanks and irrigation, and wastewater treatment.

Laser Plumbing Oamaru

29 Coquet Street, Oamaru

Tel 03 434 1232

oamaru@laserplumbing.co.nz

www.laserplumbing.co.nz



Images supplied courtesy of Tourism Waitaki

All about wheels

Young Motors are Oamaru's Suzuki agents and have been servicing the local farming community for nearly 20 years. Originally a tyre shop, it adopted a motorcycle focus when owners Mark and Sandra Young saw farmers opting for more two and four wheelers on the farm.

Their huge workshop is the base for four motorcycle mechanics who service and repair all types of bikes, from well-used farm bikes to high-tech road bikes or scooters. A car mechanic is also employed, offering the same service, repair and warrant deals, Youngs still sell all brands of car and motorbike tyres.

Sandra said Suzuki was a reliable product and customers forged long-lasting relationships with the mechanics who serviced their machines over the years. Work can often be completed while customers are off doing other jobs in town.

"A large part of our work is with the farming community, but we service and repair all makes and models." They are the only Suzuki agent between Timaru and Dunedin.

The premises on Thames Street carries a full range of motorcycle parts and accessories.

Sandra said adapting to the changing needs of their customers, who came from both rural and urban areas, was key and customer service a priority.

Young Motors

259 Thames Street
Oamaru 9400

Tel 03 434 5354

www.youngmotors.co.nz



Baling North Otago

Sam Percival Contracting is an agricultural business, specialising in baleage, hay and straw. The business is based in North Otago, but covers areas from South Canterbury to East Otago.

Sam has been in the contracting business for nine years, and been an owner of Sam Percival Contracting for five. The business runs four modern, well-maintained balers. These include two round balers and two square balers, with the option of tube or individually wrapped. Sam also runs a range of other machines including mowers, rakes, discs, drills and truck and trailer units.

Baleage is their core business—he says doing a quality job is a priority. "Rather than getting bigger, we want to get better."

A full-time mechanic keeps all the machinery in order, eliminating breakdowns which can disrupt farming timetables.

Sam said his clients, who are split evenly between dairy and sheep and beef farmers, appreciated their focus on quality as baleage was important in their farming systems.

When Sam and Jess aren't behind the wheel of a tractor, in the winter months they're helping winter 600 dairy cows on the family farm.

Sam Percival Contracting

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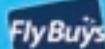


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A farming view from Tasmania

An International Grasslands Association pre-conference tour took us to Tasmania in August. BY ELE LUDEMANN

The island reminded us of New Zealand with rolling hills, fresh spring growth and cool temperatures. The similarities were even stronger on some of the farms we visited which used New Zealand equipment, genetics and had Kiwi staff.

There were differences though and one of the striking ones was a cash crop—poppies. These are widely grown for the pharmaceutical industry and bring very good returns.

Profits from poppies had enabled farmers to pay off a new irrigation development in a fraction of the time it would have taken them had they been relying on more traditional crops or stock.

The first farm we stopped at was Woolnorth, a 16,800 hectare property in the north-west corner of the island, owned by the Van Diemen's Land Company.

It has 12 rotary and one herringbone dairy sheds and a 2,500 hectare heifer raising facility. The company owns another 12 dairy farms nearby which with the Woolnorth property support 19,000 in-milk cows.

VDL is Australia's largest dairy farming business and last season supplied Fonterra with 6.22 million kilograms of milk solids.

Greenvale in Cressy runs a breeding flock of Poll Dorset cross ewes and maiden ewes on

dryland pastures. The lambs produced each year are supplemented with trade stock which is bought-in to support a specialist lamb finishing operation on irrigated land. Another irrigated block produces cash crops including beans, potatoes, poppies and peas.

Kingston in the northern Midlands of Tasmania is unique for its biodiversity which includes several threatened species of plants.

The abundance of well-preserved native grasslands on a large scale is a feature of the property. It supports 8% of all Tasmania's kangaroo grass and 1% of its tussock grasslands.

The native grasslands are managed sustainably to support a flock of merinos. A conservation department worker told us that the grazing protected the native species by helping to control weeds.

Kingston's merinos produce superfine wool in the 15–17 micron range. It's sold to Italian mills which produce fabric for leading international fashion companies.

The property is trialling BioClip as an alternative to shearing. BioClip protein is injected into the sheep which results in wool fibres beneath the skin temporarily breaking the fibres. The animals are covered in nylon mesh which collects the wool as it falls out.

ABOVE: Ewe in a mesh jacket to catch the wool which falls out after a BioClip injection.

This is at the experimental stage but one of its benefits is greater consistency in the length of fleece than is possible through conventional shearing.

Our final stop was Casaveen Knitwear which was established in 1989 by Allan and Clare McShane who wanted to add value to the wool they produced. They recently sold their farm to concentrate on the factory and café which is a significant employer in the small town of Oatlands.

It's always a privilege to visit farms and get an insight into farming practices and business operations. The 38 scientists and farmers from all around the world on this tour gained a real appreciation of Tasmania's agriculture.

Ele Ludemann
homepaddock.wordpress.com



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The perfect ham

Finding the perfect Christmas ham starts at your favourite butcher shop says Ian Carter, Chairman of NZ Pork. BY MARIE TAYLOR

Choose ham with a 100% New Zealand Pork label, Ian says, "It's certainly an advantage buying a locally sourced ham because they are fresher."

Ian explains 48% of the pig meat we eat in NZ is imported and 64% of processed pig meat is imported. "A large number of containers of legs will come into NZ frozen, and then will be processed into hams for Christmas in NZ."

But because there isn't mandatory country of origin labeling on food in New Zealand, consumers have

to be on the lookout for the 100% NZ Pork label.

Make sure the ham comes with a Pig Care label by requesting it from your retailer Ian says. This ensures pigs were raised using a comprehensive and transparent welfare standard.

"Butchers are keen on making sure you have a good eating experience with ham, so align yourself with a brand where you have confidence in the process and like the cure they give the ham."

The next decision is what size and quality of ham to buy. Ian says most processors have a quality brand ham, with large processors also offering budget hams.

"Look at the option of buying a half leg from a quality brand rather than buying a small whole leg if there are budget and size constraints."

"Heavier animals have grown faster and will tend to be better quality pigs, providing a better eating experience. This will give the family an enjoyable Christmas ham occasion."

Ian knows his Christmas ham is going to be good—it's from his own Hampden farm in North Otago where he produces 4,500 pigs each year. It's a very productive 272ha property, also running 600 beef cattle including some dairy support. "As a comparison to put out the equivalent amount of beef protein as we do pork annually, we would have to carry about 4500 cattle."

From the 200 breeding sows we produce approximately 400 tonnes of pig meat protein per year on contract to wholesaler Fresh Pork.

"Campbell's Butchery in Oamaru do an excellent job of curing our Christmas ham and also produce our bacon and pork cuts. We only eat our own grown pork. We have a traditional roast ham, skin removed with a honey glaze and cloves. We serve it with new potatoes, vegetables and gravy unless it's really hot and then we will be eating the ham out by the barbeque—with a Heineken not far away. We have a very relaxed Christmas."

Butcher Mike Hanson at Netherby Meats in Ashburton uses tried and true recipes which have been handed down by his father and grandfather.

He always buys 100% locally grown pigs, which are killed at the local abattoir, then come to their shop where they are boned out. The hams are made from the big back leg of the pig, and are cured for a whole week in brine.

The hams are hung for a week and smoked for three hours using manuka woodchips. Then it's back in the chiller to dry the hams and ensure they are nice and firm.

The next step is to slowly cook the hams for 12 to 15 hours, ensuring the temperature doesn't get above 73–75degC. Then we let them dry on a rack in the chiller for a day or two, and then cut them into whatever size you want, he says.

Mike says larger processors of hams use different and faster techniques, injecting cures and flavours before cooking and smoking in a process which takes only three days. The resulting budget hams are sold around the \$9/kg mark.

"Our process is slower and old fashioned and like most butchers our price is around \$15/kg. But the results are really two different things."

All customers have to do then is take the whole cooked ham and peel the skin off leaving a wee bit of fat to be scored in a criss-cross pattern. After glazing, it only needs to be reheated in the oven for two or three hours with the oven at 150degC, so that the internal temperature of the ham reaches up to 75°C.

In comparison an uncooked ham needs to be cooked for between six to eight hours on low heat.

Glazes can include cloves, cherries and pineapple, and for the past 12 years he has used a honeydew glaze made of brown sugar and maple syrup.

Once opened hams have a week of shelf life. Mike says the worst thing to do with a ham is to wrap it in cling film which makes it sweat.

Instead he recommends keeping the ham in the fridge protected by a ham bag or a tea towel first soaked in vinegar and then wrung out. "Cover the ham with the tea towel to keep it fresh and moist."

Anita Sarginson, the national president of the New Zealand Chefs Association really knows her

hams—she has just been chief judge for the ham and bacon awards for the third year in a row.

She recommends buying a cooked ham, and asking the butcher for a cure with a good balance of salt and sweetness. "And with a lovely bit of smoke you can't go too wrong."

"It's easy in terms of food safety to buy a cooked ham, and you retain all the smoky characteristics. You should give them a bit of time to warm up in the oven before glazing so the glaze doesn't over-caramelize."

"If you want a bit more smoke, a barbeque is always a good way to cook a ham, especially on a sunny day."

Then after Christmas Anita goes around to a friend's place for her special turkey, ham and cranberry pie.

"She makes a béchamel sauce, adds the diced turkey and ham, puts it into puff pastry, tops it with redcurrant jelly and the kids "woof" it down. It's a great idea. I really love going to her place for leftovers."

Want to know more, than check out the NZ Pork website www.pork.co.nz

Baked Ham Glaze

1 cup brown sugar	spices
1 bottle (330ml) apple cider	Salt and pepper to taste
½ jar orange marmalade	Garnish
2 tbsp Dijon mustard	Candied oranges
1 tbsp red currant jelly	Cloves
½ tsp ground toasted	Herbs

METHOD

Take the orange marmalade and redcurrant jelly place in a pot on a low heat and melt gently, add in the other ingredients and bring to the boil. Correct the seasoning and cool before using as your basting product.

PREPARING THE HAM

1. Score around the hock end (the bit with the bone sticking out of it)
2. Place a knife under the top layer of the skin and gently loosen the skin away from the fat layer.

3. Score the fat layer if you wish, this will decorate up nicely if you do.
4. Place a little water in the bottom of your roasting pan and wrap the ham in a little cooking paper and tin foil, warm on a low heat say 150°C for approx. 1 hour (dependant on size)
5. Remove the paper and foil and turn up your oven (180°C) and start basting ladies and gentleman, regularly. Feel free to spoon the basting juices that have accumulated in the dish, as they will have great flavour from the caramelisation process, back over the Ham for depth of flavour and colour.
6. This process should take approximately 1–2 hours dependant on size of your ham and the temperature of your oven.
7. Should you ham start to brown up to quickly, turn the oven down slightly and consider covering with cooking paper and foil again, do not put foil directly onto the ham as it will stick.

BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Mike Hanson, Netherby Meats; Anita Sarginson, National President NZ Chefs Association; Ian Carter, Chairman NZ Pork



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Where there's muck, there's money

Farmers could be missing out on mid-season milk production, according to SealesWinslow's Science Extension Manager, James Hague.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY SEALESWINSLOW

Using its Tracker system, SealesWinslow has been able to identify where improved digestion could result in more milk solids and better feed conversion efficiency (FCE) mid-season. In this article, he encourages producers to think not just about the metabolisable energy (ME) that the cows eat, but also the ME that is lost in the dung. Dung can tell us a great deal about the balance of a cow's diet and whether they are utilising their feed profitably. Most of the cow's digestion should take place in the rumen, but if the rumen is not working efficiently then feed will pass through it without being sufficiently digested. To work at their optimum, the bugs in the rumen need the right environment, plus the energy, protein, minerals and time required to do their job. A shortage of any of these can result in feed not being fully digested, so it won't release all of the nutrients it contains. Yes, dry matter intake (DMI)

is important, but so is striking a profitable balance between DMI and FCE. Each kilo of dry matter costs money, so we should be concerned about the return we are getting on that investment.

By using Tracker to analyse herd performance, we have seen many cases where milk fat and protein levels are lower than desired through mid-season. If we can improve the cow's digestion, more energy will be released from their feed, lifting both protein and fat yield and thus, total solids.

Looking at dung pats (or splats) as you bring the cows in for milking is a good way of monitoring the level of digestion. Be prepared to get your hands dirty. Rub a scoop of dung between your thumb and forefingers to see if there is undigested fibre, sliminess, undigested feeds and/or mucin casts. If you are really keen, wash a sample in a kitchen sieve to catch the undigested

bits—do not return the sieve to the kitchen afterwards!

The table below shows how you can score the dung. Be aware that you will find a wide variation across the herd. Some cows will selectively graze or sort feed in the trough, which can cause individual nutritional upsets. These cows can get very loose for a while, but return to normal later. You may therefore find waves of loose and perfect dungs, in which case consider reducing choice through tighter grazing or better mixing of feed.

If your cows' dung is telling you that their digestion is not on track, contact SealesWinslow for a ration review to help make a change for the better.



The range of SealesWinslow nutritional products are available through ATS.

SCORE	1	2	3	4	5
	VERY LOOSE	LOOSE	PERFECT	FIRM	SOLID
IMAGE					
DESCRIPTION	Watery scours	Runny with bubbles. Some undigested feed	A well-formed pat about 25mm high. Fully digested. Dimple in middle.	As in 3 but not as digested, creating a matt of fibre and no dimple.	More like horse dung.
CAUSE	Indicates infectious disease (such as Johnes etc) or nitrate excess, with inadequate fermentable energy and fibre in diet.	Likely poor rumen function, resulting in acidosis and/or undegraded feed from the rumen being fermented in the hind gut.	Balanced diet	Poor rumen function. If light-coloured can indicate lack of protein in diet. If dark-coloured can indicate lack of rumen fermentable energy.	Far too much undigested fibre. Rumen fermentation function is poor and digestion is far too slow.
ACTION	Consult a vet to investigate diseases. Add more effective fibre to diet and ensure lots of palatable water available.	Ensure good supply of 'long' fibre to slow passage of feed through rumen to allow more complete digestion. If dung is dark, also add more fermentable energy.	Keep up the good work.	Balance the diet better to correct the deficiency in either protein or fermentable energy.	Diet needs more fermentable energy and protein and possibly yeast to 'kick start' the rumen.

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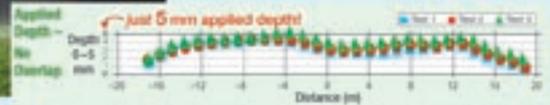
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Knowing your cows like never before

In 17 years Harry Schat has gone from milking around 300 cows on a Springston property to 1,500 on two Rakaia properties. ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY TRU-TEST

His motivation? Establishing two sons Daniel and Michael on their own properties has been near the top of the list.

His method? Using technology to know what's happening to any cow at any time.

The approach is obviously hereditary - Daniel sharemilks Haglea Farm and Michael the more recently purchased Ardlui Dairies and both rely heavily on Tru-Test MilkHub dairy automation and MiHub online herd management software.

The pasture growth this season is making close monitoring of daily cow information even more critical than usual.

Using a range of Tru-Test MilkHub modules, including in-line sensors and walk over weighing, they're monitoring daily cow information to stay on top of cow health and performance issues.

If animals are moved from one herd to the other, each cow's data is automatically transferred to the new herd when her EID is read in the shed.

Their use of Tru-Test MilkHub and MiHub, and not buying in cows from outside their operation, means the Schats typically only herd test every second year.

Harry says this is resulting in better, more accurate management of mastitis, and a better understanding of the relationship between a cow's mastitis status and her milk production.

"If you get a (herd test) figure on a particular day it can have little or no relevance to the figure a week either side," Harry says.

"You have days when a cow is a bit off colour, or on heat and not producing milk as she would normally, which might give an artificially high cell count and low production.

"By testing every day we get a much more accurate understanding of the effect of mastitis on any cow than we could by doing it every eight weeks or so, and Tru-Test MilkHub seasonal averages for mastitis can be a defining measure for what we keep and what we lose."

The Schats rank their cows on the mastitis ratio and use the milking efficiency measurement to assess a cow's yield and weight, drafting out the low producers for closer assessment.

"The drafting is really accurate; it gets 100% of the cows. If I draft out 20 cows, 20 cows are waiting in the pen for me," Harry says.

"We found 50 cows the other day that had started losing weight compared to the herd. We increased their feed and they all picked up again and started gaining weight," Harry says.

They also monitor their animals closely to understand the relativity between big cows and production.



ABOVE: Harry Schat (left) says using Tru-Test MilkHub on the two farms sharemilked by sons Daniel (right) and Michael results in better, more accurate management of mastitis and milk production.

"People say that big cows are inefficient—our goal is 500 to 550kg milk solids per cow, and for that you need a large cow," Daniel says.

"The milk efficiency number doesn't work without walk over weighing, and by weighing we can prove that because she's big, she's not inefficient. The figures do the talking."

Daniel also has a pedigree breeding programme which he acknowledges is not always the cheapest route to genetic improvement.

"It makes it really important to be able to measure the performance of your animals."

The next step for the Schats is automated heat detection.

"It's the way of the future because breeding is the time of the year that has a bearing on almost everything else in the year," Daniel says.

About Tru-Test MilkHub

Tru-Test MilkHub Dairy Automation tracks animal performance and supports herd management decisions. It comprises several modular components suitable for herringbone and rotary sheds—EID Herd Tracking, Auto Drafting, Walk Over Weighing and Automatic Heat Detection complemented with additional rotary solutions for Feed Control, In-bail Identification and Sensors. Information from each milking is collected and wirelessly transmitted to the MiHub Online Herd Management tool via an In-shed Command Unit and Cellular Modem.



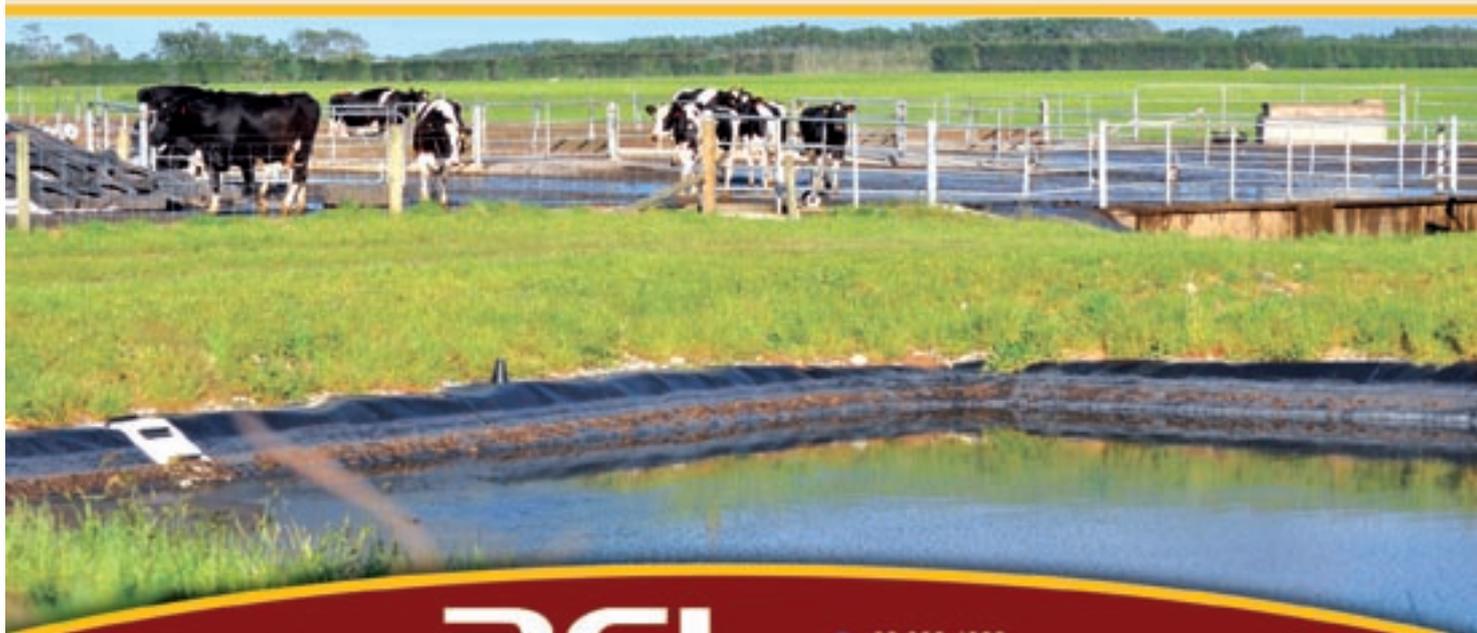
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Goliath[®] forage rape a late autumn/winter feed option

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY PGG WRIGHTSON SEEDS

If you were told you could transition stock onto brassicas before they leave the milking platform at the end of the season, help to clean up weeds before you re-grass a paddock and have additional feed for late autumn/early winter, would you be interested?

This is exactly what Joel Edkins from Fairton did. Joel manages a 215 ha dairy farm running 900 cows. Late in 2012 Joel identified that he needed more winter brassicas; Joel worked with ATS to investigate alternate brassica options as it was getting too late to plant kale.

Goliath[®] forage rape was deemed the brassica of choice as it is a high yielding multi-graze giant rape that could be fed to all stock classes during late autumn and early winter.

Goliath[®] forage rape is a rape cross kale cultivar developed by Plant & Food Research (NZ). The cross enables traditional European rape-types to be extended into a New Zealand bred, excellent winter keeping, good aphid tolerant utility crop.

Attention to detail is the secret to success when using forage rapes; good planning, good paddock preparation and regular monitoring through the season. Having never grown Goliath[®] forage rape

before, Joel ensured the crop was well managed. Old pasture was sprayed out then ploughed, Gaucho treated Goliath[®] seed was sown at 4 kg/ha followed by a timely herbicide and insecticide application ensuring the seedlings were not attacked by insects or competing with weeds for space, moisture or nutrients. Regular monitoring through the season resulted in the application of additional insecticides when the crop came under insect pressure.

The attention to detail through the season resulted in a fantastic 14.6 tDM/ha of Goliath[®] when grazing began at the start of May. 300 milking cows were transitioned onto the Goliath[®] gradually, with the allotted allocation increasing over a period of approximately ten days. Stock remained on grass during the day and were fed the Goliath[®] rape at night in combination with 2 kgDM/head of maize and straw that they were able to graze adlib. Milk solids production was maintained at 1.2kgMS/cow/day during this period.

Joel found the benefit of using Goliath[®] rape to be threefold:

- Stock maintained milk solids production with Goliath[®] as part of their late autumn diet.

ABOVE: Joel Edkins (left) with his ATS Key Account Manager in Goliath[®] forage rape.

- Stock were transitioned onto a brassica diet while still on the milking platform ready for winter grazing.
- An old pasture was regrassed following the crop.

When asked if he would use Goliath[®] rape again Joel stated "I'll definitely have another crack at it!"

To fill your autumn/early winter feed gaps with Goliath[®] forage rape, a high yielding multi-graze rape from PGG Wrightson Seeds, contact ATS Seed or your ATS Key Account Manager today on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

PGG Wrightson Seeds

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Ruralco Kids



Dear Santa...

Visit Ruralco at www.ruralco.co.nz/santaletter to download your Santa Letter.

POST TO:
Santa Claus, Santa's Workshop
North Pole 0001

CHRISTMAS TREE COOKIES

- 125g butter, softened
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder

TO DECORATE:

- 1 packet of Mini M&Ms

METHOD:

Heat oven to 180° Celsius.

Beat butter, vanilla and sugar until creamy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well. Finally, mix in flour and baking powder until just mixed.

Roll the cookie dough into two, even logs. Wrap them in baking paper and refrigerate for at least an hour. Slice the cookie logs into 1cm sections.

Place the sections onto lined baking trays, leaving room for the cookies to spread. Use the Mini M&Ms to create Christmas tree shapes on the top of each cookie, pressing them gently into the dough.

Bake for 10 minutes until golden brown.



PIPECLEANER SNOWFLAKES

Perfect for the Christmas Tree

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 silver pipecleaners
- 3 green pipecleaners

HOW TO MAKE THEM:

Cut the two silver pipecleaners in half. Put one piece to the side so you are left with three. Twist these three together in the middle and spread them so you have a shape with six points (see the image to help you).

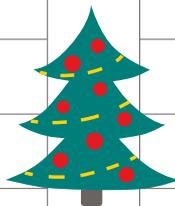
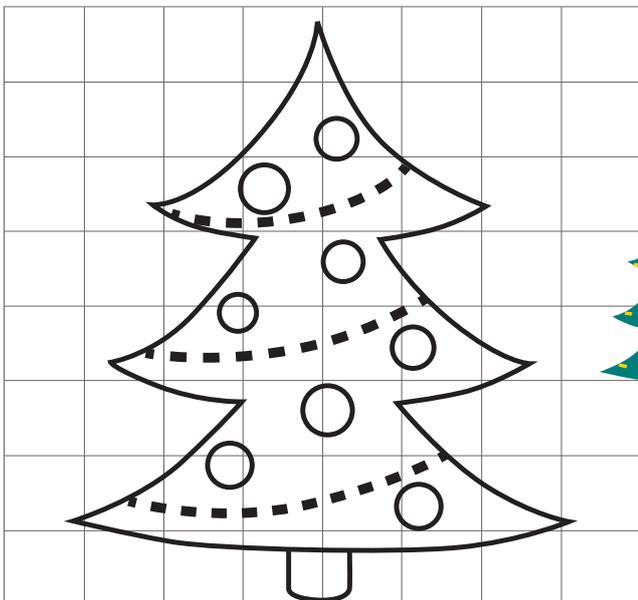
Cut the green pipecleaners in half and then in half again to get 12 pieces. Twist these on to the silver pipecleaners to decorate your snowflake.

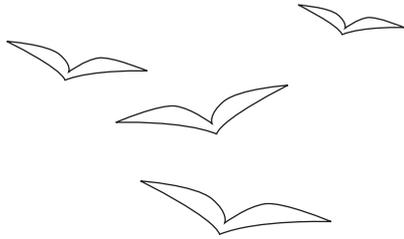
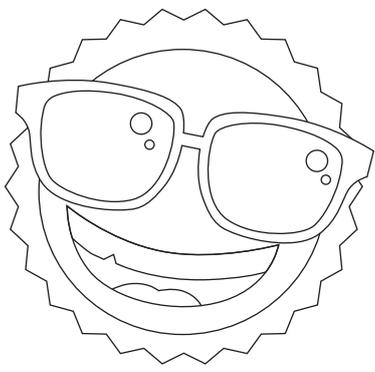
To hang your snowflake, take the silver pipecleaner you put aside, make a loop and twist this on to one of the silver ends of the snowflake.



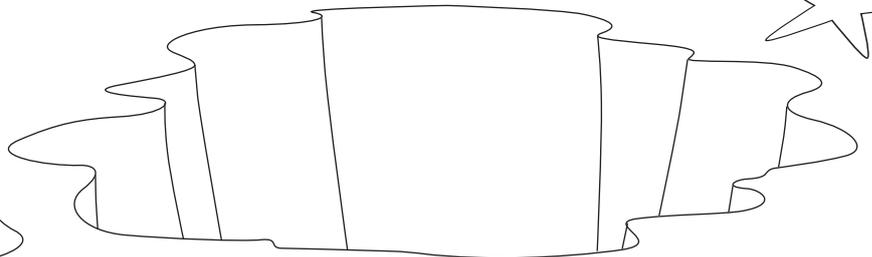
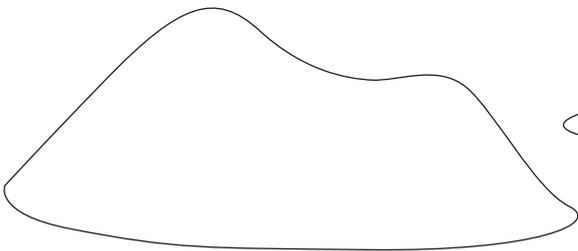
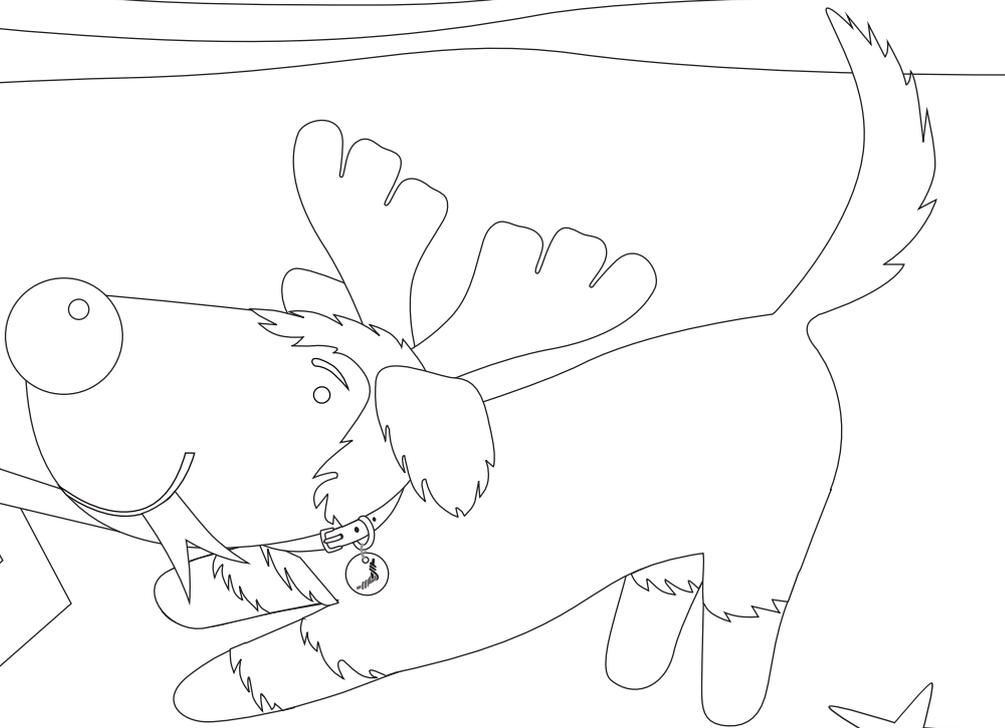
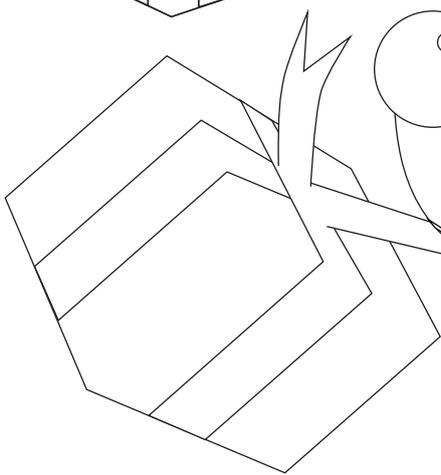
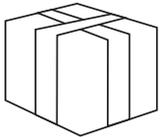
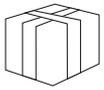
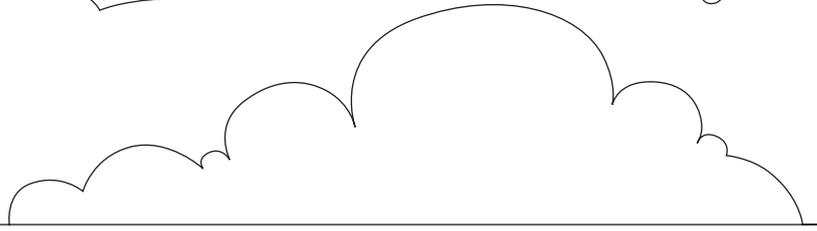
Copy the Christmas Tree

Copy the Christmas Tree using the gridlines to guide you. You might find it easiest to copy one square at a time.





Ruralco



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AGE

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TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- There are two age groups and two prize packs allocated per age group: age 4–7 and age 8–11.
- Please ensure the family Ruralco Card number, age and name of the entrant is submitted with the entry.
- One entry per child only.
- All entries must be received by Ruralco no later than 4.30pm, 21 December 2012. Post to 18 Kermode Street, Ashburton or drop off at any ATS Store.
- Winners will be announced on 14 January 2013.
- Ruralco reserves the right to publish all entries and details of the winners. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Once the judging has taken place, winners will be notified by telephone.
- The prize is not transferable or exchangeable and Ruralco reserves the right to change the prize to the same or equal value at any time if the prize becomes unavailable. No responsibility accepted for late, lost or misdirected entries.

Additional copies can be picked up from any ATS Store or downloaded from www.ruralco.co.nz

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2



6



8



3



7



9

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6 Scanpan Accent Three Piece only \$177.00

7 Scanpan Steak Knife Set only \$59.50

8 Lynn River Showa Gloves from \$10.30

9 Therapy Range Gardener Gift Set \$23.55



Christmas Parades

SUNDAY 1 DECEMBER

Dunedin Santa Parade, 3pm
George Street to the Octagon

FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER

Geraldine Christmas Parade, 7pm

SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER

Ashburton Santa Parade
Kaiapoi Carnival and Santa Parade
Hilton Street to Charles Street
Timaru Christmas Parade
Stafford Street

SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2PM

Christchurch Santa Parade
Corner of Wharenui and Riccarton
Roads to the corner of Mandeville
Street and Riccarton Road
Rangiora Toyota Santa Parade/Party
in the Park, 2pm
High Street



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Now it's December, there is one month left to use your Ruralco Card and enter the draw to win one of 3 \$1,000 prizes. Prizes are \$1,000 worth of vouchers to use at the Ruralco Suppliers/s of your choice. For a full list of Terms & Conditions check out www.ruralco.co.nz/shopsaveandwin



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ATS Shareholders can contact ATS on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287), and Ravensdown Shareholders can contact Ravensdown on 0800 100 123.

In all cases be sure to quote your member number, this can be found on your statement.

Christmas posting deadline reminder

Planning on posting presents to friends and relatives? Have a look at the dates below to make sure they arrive at their destinations by Christmas.

DOMESTIC	
Standard post	Thursday 19 December
Standard parcel	
Tracked parcel	
FastPost	Monday 23 December
Courier parcel	
Courier & Signature parcel	

AUSTRALIA	
Economy	Monday 2 December
Par Avion Air	Monday 9 December
Economy Courier	Friday 13 December
Express Courier	Monday 16 December

SOUTH PACIFIC, EAST ASIA, NORTH AMERICA, UK & EUROPE*	
Par Avion Air	Wednesday 4 December
Economy Courier	Wednesday 11 December
Express Courier	Friday 13 December

* Economy date passed in November

REST OF THE WORLD*	
Par Avion Air	Monday 2 December
Economy Courier	Friday 6 December
Express Courier	Wednesday 11 December

* Economy date passed in November

Name the Ruralco Dog competition

Submit your suggestion at www.ruralco.co.nz/nameme and go in the draw to win!

Entries close
27 December 2013.



Ashburton A&P Show

Ruralco attended the Ashburton A&P Show on 1 & 2 November and ran the Drinking Trough joining the ATS and Ravensdown marquees. It was a great turn out, with Saturday being the highlight in the sunshine. To see pictures from the event visit page 51.



Out and about

Ashburton A&P Show

1. Barbara Burst and Nancy Christey / 2. Richard Fridd and Becky Murray / 3. Hamish Yeatman / 4. Mary-Anne and Harriet Stock / 5. Jasper Keating and Mitchell Cushnie / 6. Rosa Thomas and Amanda Grigg / 7. Val Cranfield, Judith Skevington and Shona Thomas



Out and about

ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge

1. Big Als take out the 35km team event presented by Bill Thomas from Longbeach Estate / 2. Ben Stock / 3. David Geddes / 4. Alison King / 5. John Low and Andy Collis / 6. Fiona Peck / 7. Sarah Wilson / 8. Ian King / 9. Summer Wine Cyclists

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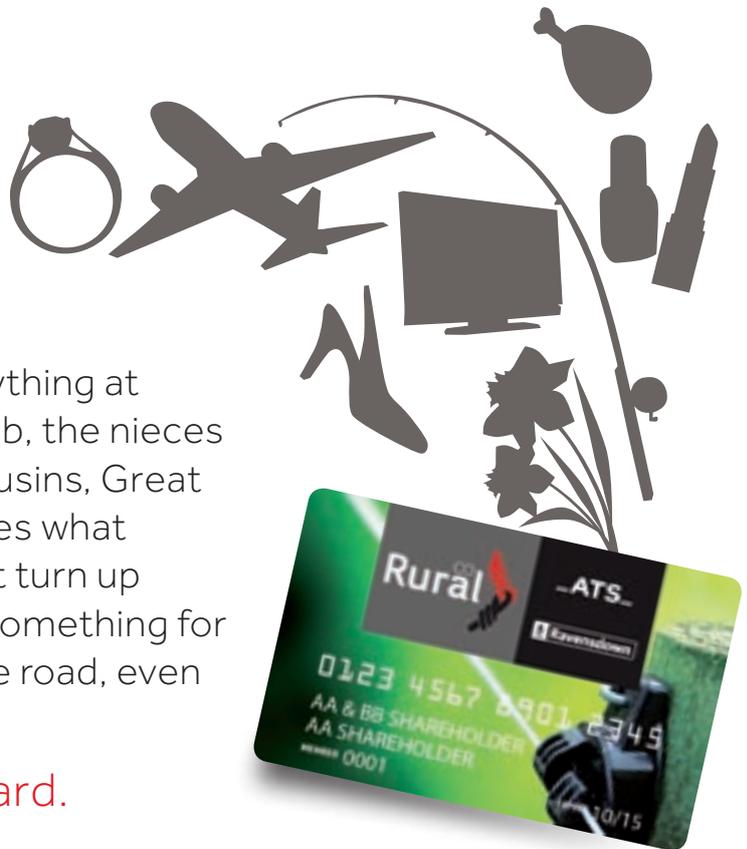


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At this time of year things are getting busy and you're making your list and probably checking it twice.

What on earth are you going to get for the other half this year? There's Mum and Dad (who already have everything), the kids who have helped out by writing their own extensive and unreasonable list, Nana & Grandad who, as usual, don't want anything at all. Then there's Aunty Jean, Uncle Bob, the nieces and nephews, the cousins, second cousins, Great Aunt Whats-Her-Name who never likes what you get her anyway, those people that turn up unannounced who you have to have something for just in case, the postie, the lady up the road, even the dog needs something.



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