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Moving the dial on safety

Growing up on a farm, the dangers that came with working in our sector were ingrained in us from a young age.

We all had near misses, even as children.

It was almost a rite of passage. On quad bikes, driving the farm ute, working in the yards and discovering very quickly what happens when you get on the wrong side of a sheep.

Most of the time, they were just that. Near misses.

Sadly, some weren't.

We lost young members of our community in farm accidents in relatively quick succession, in circumstances that could absolutely have been avoided. Those losses sent shockwaves of grief through our district, and I will never forget them.

Looking back, one of the biggest enemies of farm safety was an attitude many of us would recognise.

"She'll be right."

"It'll only take a minute."

Those few words can precede an astonishing number of bad decisions.

Farm safety has come a long way since then, and that deserves to be acknowledged.

ACC figures show new agriculture injury claims fell from 25,873 in 2020 to 17,322 in 2025, a reduction of around a third in five years.

Something is shifting.

That is why the work being done by organisations such as Safer Farms matters. The dial is moving because the conversation around safety is changing too.

It is rarely helpful for people with little understanding of what it is actually like to work the land to simply tell farmers what they should and shouldn't be doing.

Farming is unpredictable. Weather changes. Machinery breaks. Jobs need doing in less than ideal conditions.

Advice that ignores that reality is easily dismissed.

But farmer to farmer is different.

Practical advice from someone who understands the job, and knows why a shortcut might be tempting, has a much greater chance of resonating.

There is still work to do.

A recent nationwide WorkSafe campaign involving 680 farm assessments found gaps around hazardous substances, PTO guarding and farm vehicles. WorkSafe has also reported that vehicles were involved in four out of five agricultural deaths notified to it between 2020 and 2025.

But perhaps one of the most important parts of the farm safety conversation is harder to put a guard around.

Wellbeing.

Farm safety and farmer wellbeing are intrinsically linked.

Stress, exhaustion and distraction can be every bit as dangerous as a muddy track in winter or an unguarded piece of machinery.

When you are tired after weeks of long days, worried about finances, distracted by something happening at home, or simply under pressure to get one more job finished before dark, judgement can change.

That is often when "it'll only take a minute" starts sounding reasonable.

Safety therefore cannot just be about machinery, helmets, paperwork and compliance.

It is also about recognising when you are too tired to make a good decision. Asking someone for a hand. Taking another five minutes to do the job properly. Checking in on the person working alone. And sometimes accepting that a job can wait until tomorrow.

The fall in ACC claims suggests we are getting better at this.

But every farmer who has had a close



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call knows how little can separate a story you laugh about afterwards from one that changes a family and a community forever.

Perhaps that is the next step in shifting the dial.

Not more finger pointing.

Just continuing to challenge those old habits, farmer to farmer, job by job, whenever we hear ourselves say:

"It'll only take a minute."

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Seeds of resilience:

McCaws take top arable honour



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR

Methven couple John and Mel McCaw have been named 2026 Arable Farmers of the Year, taking out the industry's top honour at the Arable Awards.

The pair also won Seed Grower of the Year, putting them in contention for the overall title alongside the winners of the cereal, maize and positive environmental impact categories.

Nearly 500 people attended the annual awards dinner in Christchurch on August 20.

"It was pretty surreal, actually. It was a pretty crazy night," John said.

"It was very emotional and, it's a bit of a cliché, but quite humbling. You're in front of all your peers and to receive an honour like that is really very special."

"When they read our name out, it was like a gut punch. It was this huge emotion of, 'Wow, it's us.' I really did not see that coming."

Mel said she was equally surprised.

"We were just so excited to get the Seed Grower award. I didn't even think about the next one. Then next thing it was us. It was so amazing."

The McCaws farm around 600 hectares near Methven, producing arable crops and herbage seed, particularly ryegrass and cocksfoot, while integrating livestock through much of the rotation. The family also owns McCaw Seeds, a seed dressing and processing business.

Foundation for Arable Research said the couple were recognised for their on-farm performance, attention to detail, innovation and commitment to advancing the seed industry.

Behind the award sits a family story stretching back decades.

John's parents, Peter and Erena McCaw, bought the home farm in 1968. During the difficult farming years of the 1980s, the local seed dressing operator went bankrupt.

Peter gathered a group of farmers with the idea of buying the business together, but as financial pressure mounted the other investors pulled out one by one.

"They said, 'Look, we'll support you if you do this, Peter.' So he did," John said.

At the time, interest rates reached 25 per cent.

"He was effectively buying the company again every four years. It was unbelievable."

"Pretty bold, really brave stuff," John said.

Peter is now 87, but John said his father still has the same instinct to look ahead.

"I've always said if you could extract him from his 87-year-old body and put him in a 25-year-old body, he'd be off like a rocket because he's still positive and thinking ahead and can see



John and Mel McCaw celebrate being named 2026 Arable Farmers of the Year at the Arable Awards in Christchurch.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

opportunities."

John is equally clear that the legacy belongs to both parents.

Erena worked for many years as an agricultural journalist across several rural publications, while also being part of the farming business and family life.

"Absolute credit to both Mum and Dad for what they achieved, the amount of sacrifice that it took to do that, and the foresight."

Both were in the audience when John and Mel received the award.

That resilience has shaped the way John views the pressures facing arable farming today.

"One of the biggest challenges for arable is not to get your head down and not to talk each other down into a hole," he said.

"I'm not saying everything's rosy. It's not. We've got a lot of challenges that we need to work through. But it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy if we talk

ourselves down."

His message at the awards was equally direct: "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

On-farm resilience also comes through diversity. The McCaws use livestock across cocksfoot paddocks after harvest, winter feed crops and ryegrass.

"We are a cropping farm, but we probably have animals in almost every paddock at some point during a calendar year."

Mel said her role on the farm has shifted over the years, particularly after the couple had children.

"We discuss things. I'm the sounding board for new ideas," she said.

"When I can, I like getting out there with the sheep, and at the moment a big part of it is supporting the kids."

For John, that is what family farming is about.

"It's very rarely one person. It's

a partnership, but it also involves multiple generations."

Peter and Erena remain on the farm, John still speaks to his father every day, and the McCaws' children are already involved.

Their children are developing their own farming interests, including running sheep and growing crops on a small paddock near the house.

John said he and Mel are trying to pass on the same values he learned from his parents.

"Being a farmer in a family farm situation defines you as a person. It's who you are, it's where you live, it's what you do."

"You're living and breathing it, and the whole family is doing the same."

The evening also recognised four significant contributors to New Zealand's arable sector with induction into the Arable Industry Hall of Fame.

They were South Pacific Seeds managing director John McKay, pasture seed and forage industry leader John McKenzie, Wakanui arable farmers and two-time world wheat yield record holders Eric and Maxine Watson, and the late Murray Kelly, a highly regarded senior research agronomist with PGG Wrightson Seeds.

Other 2026 Arable Award winners included:

- Cereal Grower of the Year: Andrew and Amy Darling, Adar Farming Ltd
- Maize Grower of the Year: Mark Shera, Parkfields Farm
- Innovation Award: Marty and Georgina Skurr, Minchins Milling
- Positive Environmental Impact Award: Lovett Family Farms
- Agronomist of the Year: Sean Mulligan
- Working Together Award: The SCID Rebuild Team

Kane turns succession challenge into award-winning plan



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR

West Otago dairy farmer Luke Kane has taken out a prestigious trans-Tasman farming award, winning the 2026 Rabobank Dr John Morris Business Development Prize.

The award is presented through Rabobank's Executive Development Programme (EDP) and recognises an outstanding business development project focused on strategic growth, leadership and long-term sustainability.

Kane, who farms near Tapanui with his wife Nicole, said the win had come as a surprise.

"It's pretty amazing," he said. "I certainly didn't see the award coming."

A fourth-generation farmer, Kane is a director of two family farming companies, including Westholm Dairies Limited. The wider 668-hectare operation includes a 264-hectare dairy platform milking 700 crossbred cows, alongside beef finishing and stud cattle.

The EDP is run across two residential modules held about a year apart and is designed to strengthen farmers' strategic planning, commercial management and leadership skills.

After the first module, participants develop a business project. Kane said projects were first submitted in no more than five pages, with nine participants selected to deliver a 15-minute presentation during the second module.

For Kane, the obvious subject was succession.

His family had already been working through the process for close to a decade, with what he described as "a couple of false starts, putting it politely".

His goal after the first EDP module was to bring the family back together and establish a clearer plan for completing the process.

What surprised him was how quickly that plan began to move.

"We set some goals and, in hindsight, the timelines were far too long," he said.

"That was probably what surprised us, how quickly it could actually be achieved."

With lessons from the programme and support from key advisers, the family completed the process much sooner than Kane had expected.

"We bought the whole family out five weeks ago," he said.

"We thought it was going to take another five to 10 years to settle everything up, so that was huge."

One of the biggest lessons, Kane said, was that succession needed to start with people rather than numbers.

"You're constantly trying to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and ask, 'What does this deal mean for me? What does it mean if I'm sitting in a different brother's

shoes? What does it mean for everybody?'"

Understanding everyone's motivations had to come before determining whether an arrangement worked commercially.

"None of these succession arrangements work unless you've done that first," he said.

"The finance piece is the last piece."

Kane said he wished he had gained that perspective earlier.

"I'd love to have done this five or six years ago. We might be looking at a completely different family structure right now, but hindsight is hindsight."

The programme also prompted Luke and Nicole to take a harder look at their wider business.

Before EDP, Kane said they felt things were "chugging along quite nicely", but stepping away from day-to-day farming gave them the chance to identify what was working well and where improvements could be made.

With succession now completed, the business had greater clarity about its next steps, including possible equity partnerships, additional farm ownership and creating pathways for staff.

"It allows us to keep ticking off those long-term goals and really push the business a bit harder now."

EDP also helped give Luke and Nicole the confidence to enter the 2026 Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards, which recognise environmental, economic and social performance

in farming. They went on to win the Otago Supreme Award.

Kane said feedback from that judging process also fed into his EDP project.

He valued being exposed to ideas outside dairy farming, particularly as there were only two dairy farmers in the second module.

"There were so many systems and procedures I could pick up from people involved in completely different types of farming and adapt to our own business," he said.

"It's just a different way of thinking."

For other farming families facing succession, Kane's advice is to step away from the day-to-day business and take an honest look at the

bigger picture.

"I'd say doing this is a bit like doing a stocktake," he said.

"You don't know what you have, or what you don't have, until you really delve into it and take the time to step out of the day-to-day running of the business and identify those key strengths and weaknesses."

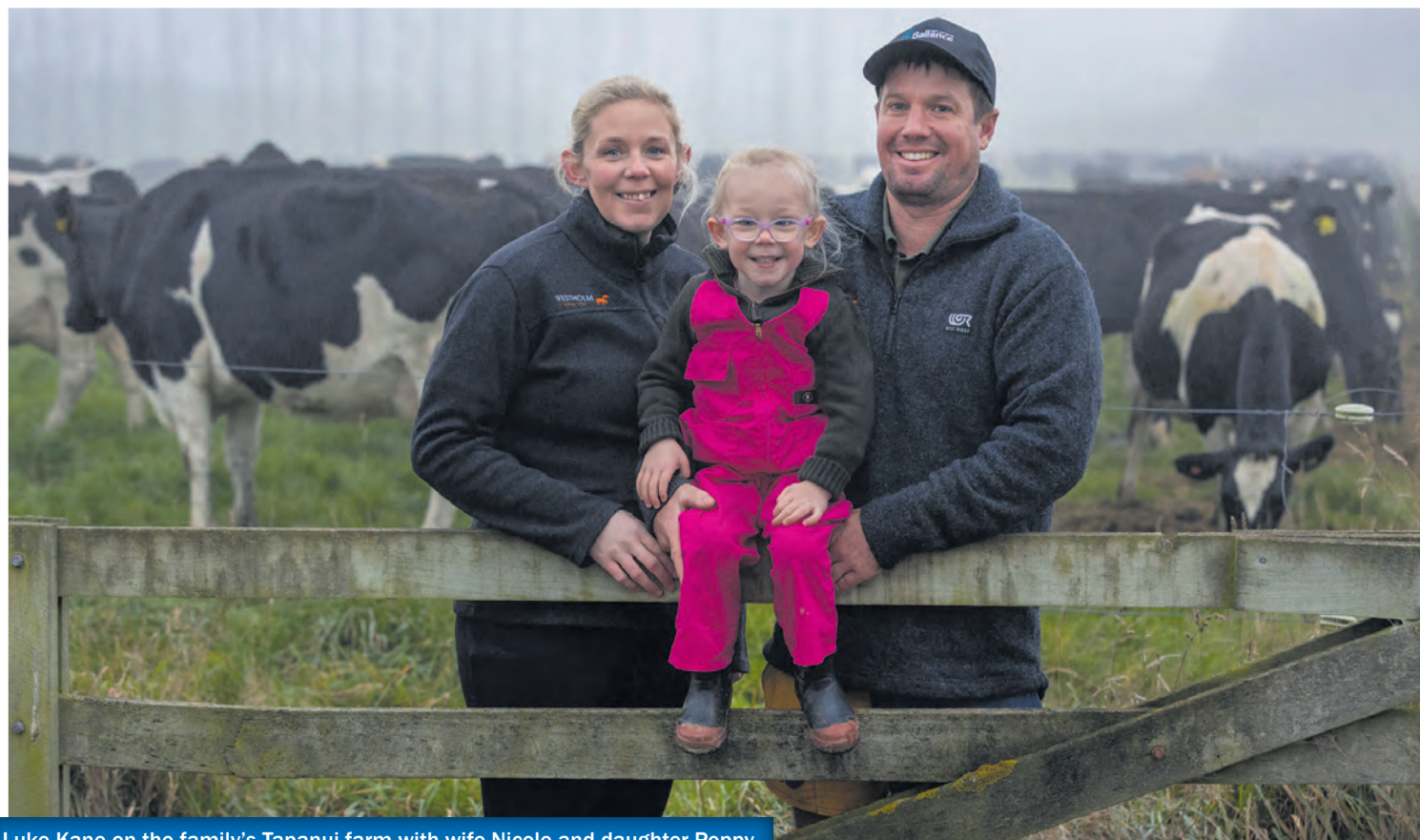
And while succession can feel daunting, Kane said the process had also opened his eyes to what could be possible.

"It's probably not scary doing it. What's scary is learning where your business could actually be in 10 years."

"When you look at some of the potential for compounding growth now, you think, 'Holy, this is hard to fathom.'"



West Otago dairy farmer Luke Kane receives the 2026 Rabobank Dr John Morris Business Development Prize from Rabobank's Elio Pegorer at the Executive Development Programme awards evening. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Luke Kane on the family's Tapanui farm with wife Nicole and daughter Poppy.

Spray and walk away? Not for much longer



Regular crop monitoring can help growers identify pest and disease problems early and reduce their reliance on agrichemicals as part of an integrated pest management approach.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Pesticide resistance is often compared with antibiotic resistance in humans. The more heavily a product is relied upon, the greater the chance the pest, weed or disease it is designed to control will adapt and become harder to kill.

For New Zealand growers, that is no longer a distant or theoretical risk.

A Lighter Touch programme director Livia Esterhazy said some horticulture, viticulture and arable crops already had a very limited number of effective crop-

protection tools available.

"If you've got a limited number of tools, you'll use those tools more, and that only increases the risk of resistance," she said.

"Ultimately, we do not want to reach the point where growers have no tools left in the toolbox."

A new national campaign, Keep What Works, Working, is encouraging growers to talk with their agronomists and advisers before spray programmes are locked in for the season.

The campaign is led by A Lighter Touch, a government and industry programme focused on moving crop protection towards more integrated biological, ecological and chemical approaches.

Its message is simple: protecting the products growers rely on now will require thousands of practical decisions across farms, orchards and vineyards.

Esterhazy said one of the biggest challenges was that resistance

could develop slowly and be difficult to detect.

By the time growers noticed their current chemicals were losing efficacy, resistance could already be well established in the crop.

Growers needed to monitor how well their existing crop-protection programmes were working, but the aim was to act before a product began to fail.

Good resistance management could include biodiverse planting, biological controls, beneficial insects and new technologies that reduced growers' reliance on agrichemicals.

In one A Lighter Touch brassica trial targeting diamondback moth, the use of chemistry was reduced by two-thirds while still producing a commercially harvestable crop.

In another trial, a tiny biological-control wasp was introduced into tomato greenhouses to help manage tomato potato psyllid.

By the second year of the trial,

no chemistry was used.

"There is no silver bullet, but there are ways of supporting the use of agrichemicals so that when growers do need them, they are effective," Esterhazy said.

The scale of pesticide resistance in New Zealand is still not fully understood.

Until recently, surveillance and testing had largely been carried out separately by individual sectors and organisations, making it difficult to build a clear national picture.

A Lighter Touch has now completed work identifying who is monitoring resistance and where, but further work is needed to establish which crops are most at risk and how widespread the problem has become.

Some within the industry regard resistance as one of the biggest challenges the current generation of growers will face.

Economic modelling commissioned by A Lighter Touch estimated that reduced resistance management could cost New Zealand's horticulture, viticulture and arable sectors between \$74 million and more than \$1.26 billion over 10 years, depending on how severe and widespread the problem became.

The figures are scenario-based estimates rather than predictions, but they highlight the potential consequences of lower yields, declining crop quality, higher input costs and market-access risks.

Esterhazy said growers understood resistance, but immediate financial and production pressures could make it easy to defer action.

"Sometimes the priority is simply getting the required yield this season, and resistance becomes something to deal with next year.

"The further you kick the can down the road, the bigger the problem will be when it hits."

The campaign was not asking growers to change their entire production systems overnight.

Instead, it encouraged them to start with a conversation, review their current programmes and consider adding new tools that could reduce their reliance on chemistry.

Esterhazy said resistance was not just a New Zealand issue. It was a major global problem with implications for food production and food security.

She said large-scale monoculture systems overseas could increase pressure on crops, with the same plants grown in the same fields and the same chemicals used year after year.

Esterhazy pointed to Brazil, where resistance problems in soy became so serious that the crop came close to collapse and the government moved to speed up the registration of biological products.

"It sounds dramatic that a whole crop in a country could collapse through resistance, but it has happened."

New Zealand had an advantage because its industries were relatively small and growers, researchers and advisers were often willing to share information.

That collaboration needed to continue, she said, particularly with A Lighter Touch due to finish at the end of its seven-year funding term in March 2027.

Horticulture New Zealand and other industry partners were working with the programme to ensure its resources, resistance-management strategies and collaborative networks were not lost.

Esterhazy said the work needed to evolve rather than simply end when the funding stopped.

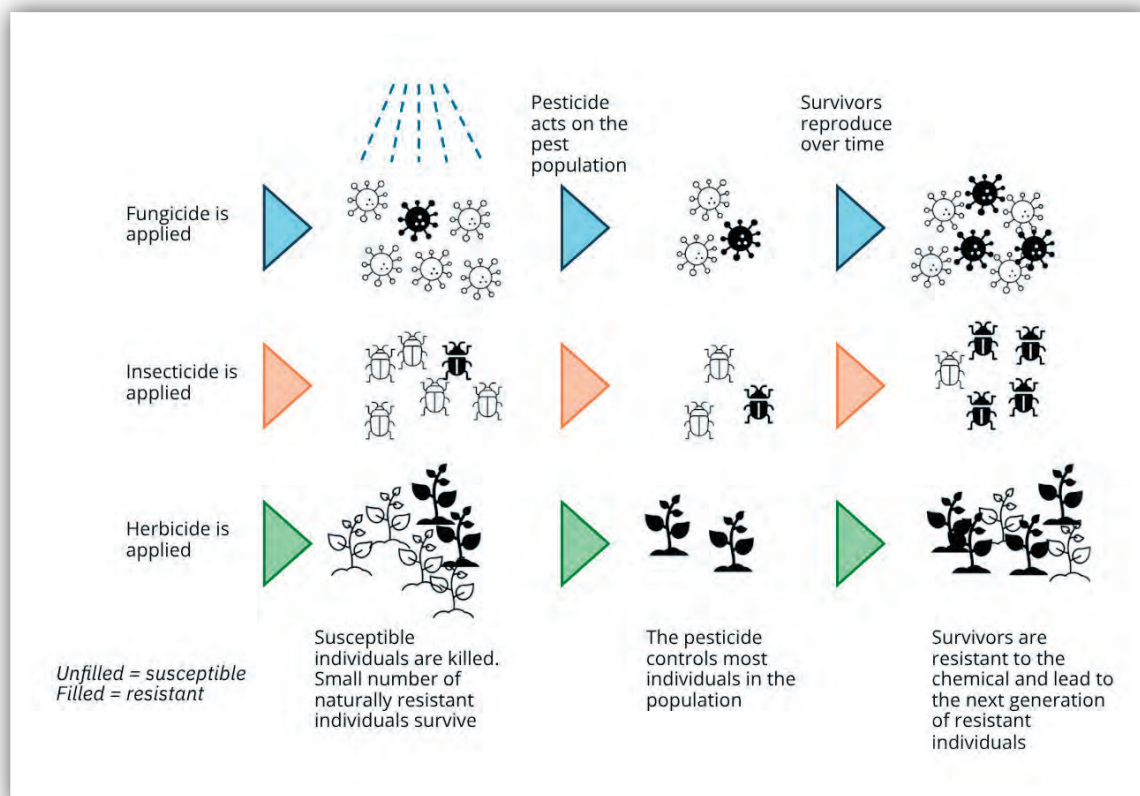
Ultimately, the campaign came back to protecting the crop-protection products growers already had.

"We cannot just keep spraying and hope the problem will go away, because these pests and diseases know how to adapt.

"At the end of the day, all we want growers to do is have a conversation."



A Lighter Touch programme director Livia Esterhazy says pesticide resistance is a growing global threat with implications for crop production and food security. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Repeatedly using pesticides with the same mode of action can allow naturally resistant pests, weeds and diseases to survive, reproduce and eventually dominate the population.

For forage brassica success, prevention is better than cure

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One size does not fit all when it comes to pre-emergence forage brassica weed control.

There are a whole range of weeds to tackle, and they can vary from property to property and even from paddock to paddock. Failing to get on top of them can impact not only the current crop but future crops.

Dr Lauren Jones, UPL Regional Manager Central South Island, says weed pressure can result in up to 60% yield losses. "Unfortunately, weeds can be more vigorous than the crops we're planting, and the weedier the crop the lower the yield as weeds are competing for light, water, and the expensive nutrients you've put in. Once the crop canopy closes there's usually no problem but it's important to get it to that stage."

Forage brassicas are sensitive to weed pressure early on and it typically takes 4-8 weeks for canopy closure.

And the impact of not controlling weeds pre-emergence is not limited to one season. A weed seed bank can be building up, unseen, in the soil which will impact the paddock's productivity for years.

Lauren recommends not one active, but a coordinated approach. "One active is not necessarily the best way. All have their particular strengths. The combination of three products with four actives — Major, Monarch, and Merit — gives you really good weed control pre-emergence and they're compatible, which makes application easy and cost effective."

Monarch can also be used as a post emergence back-up - where needed.

Lauren says in Canterbury forage brassicas are a hugely important winter crop, contributing 5-20% of feed. "Kale, rape, and swedes are used across dairy, sheep, and beef. Taking out weeds at the start makes the chance of a good crop and reliable feed over the crucial winter shoulder easier."

She says it's also vital to monitor the paddock and consider its history. "It can be two weeks from a potentially good crop to disaster. If you do the basics right, that's a good start. If not controlled early, then salvaging crops post-emergence can easily turn into a nightmare, especially with some post-emergence herbicides potentially causing damage to the crop you're intending to protect."

Greg McIntyre, UPL Regional Manager Otago and Southland, agrees. "You don't want weeds dumping seeds that will impact the next rotations. Farmers always have to be looking a couple of years' ahead."

"It's not just the current season's forage brassica crops that are at risk. Weed seed banks can build up quickly in the soil. That threatens future crops and can compromise long-term production outcomes."

The power of the three herbicides combined is firmly grounded in science. Merit (alachlor) controls a range of certain annual broadleaf and grass weeds in forage brassica, maize and vegetable crops. Proven and effective, Merit



extends the weed spectrum in a pre-emergence application. Merit's odour is also lower compared to other herbicides on the market.

Major (clomazone) is a residual preemergence herbicide controlling a wide range of annual broadleaf and grass weeds in forage brassica crops. It provides outstanding control of problem weeds such as Shepherd's purse, chickweed and cleavers.

A residual herbicide, Major is taken up through roots and emerging shoots of weed seeds. It has little effective contact action and must be applied before weeds and crops emerge.

While Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursapastoris*), may seem relatively innocuous, it is a host for clubroot. Clubroot is caused by a soil-borne fungus and affects all brassica species. Clubroot infects root tissues, stimulating abnormal growth of affected parts. The clubbed tissue significantly restricts growth and

can also release spores which can be transferred to other paddocks. Within the soil, these spores can last over ten years, infecting any subsequent brassica crop in the rotation. Lauren says once clubroot is there, it's very difficult to get rid of. "Without thorough pre-emergence control, you would need very long rotations between brassica crops. That wouldn't be practical for many farming systems."

For Greg, Unison is the adjuvant of choice to be applied with Major, Monarch, and Merit for pre-emergence weed control. Trial work has consistently demonstrated improved efficacy when Unison is included.

For more information on how to protect your forage brassica crops right from the start, contact Lauren Jones, UPL NZ Regional Manager Central South Island, at 021 987 735 or Greg McIntyre, UPL NZ Regional Manager Otago and Southland, at 021 519 772.

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Halter's new calving detection feature uses collar behaviour data to alert farmers when a cow is calving, helping them prioritise checks and respond sooner.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

New Halter technology gives farmers a head start on calving



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

A new calving detection tool is giving farmers an early heads-up when cows are calving, using behaviour data already being collected through Halter's virtual fencing collars.

The feature analyses changes in cow behaviour and sends an alert directly to a farmer's Halter app when signs of calving are detected, helping them prioritise which animals to check first.

Halter says it is the first calving detection feature of its kind within virtual fencing technology and has made it available to dairy and beef farmers ahead of the 2026 calving season.

Taranaki dairy farmer Aaron Fisher has been using the feature for about two weeks and said every alert he had received had accurately identified a cow that was either calving or had just calved.

"For me, it's been 100% accurate," Fisher said.

"It's the busiest time of year and they're the most vulnerable cows. To have a feature there that's been 100% accurate is just a game changer for that individual cow around that busy time of year."

Fisher milks 150 cows on a coastal Taranaki property and operates the farm largely on his own.

He said the new technology had not fundamentally changed the way he managed calving, but it gave him a valuable head start.

"A cow that calves at midnight might not get noticed or checked until five or six in the morning," he said.

"If that individual cow's got a six-hour advantage, whether it's on fresh feed or a cleaner part of the paddock, a bit of shelter by pausing the collar, as opposed to having

to wait for me to get up in the morning and check that cow, that's an advantage."

Once a calving alert is received, farmers can activate the LED on the cow's collar to help identify her within the mob.

They can also pause the virtual fencing function for that animal, allowing her to move freely onto fresh pasture or remain with her calf without being virtually contained.

Fisher said the feature could also help reduce some of the workload and mental pressure associated with calving.

Once the busiest part of the season had passed, reliable alerts could potentially remove the need for some additional nighttime or early morning checks.

"You can wake up and know none have calved, or know the ones that have calved and you've

paused their collar and they're on fresh grass, so it just allows you to get on with the rest of your jobs."

Saving 20 minutes or half an hour on individual days quickly accumulated across a week, he said.

The alerts Fisher had received so far had generally come when a cow was actively calving or shortly after she had calved, rather than several hours beforehand.

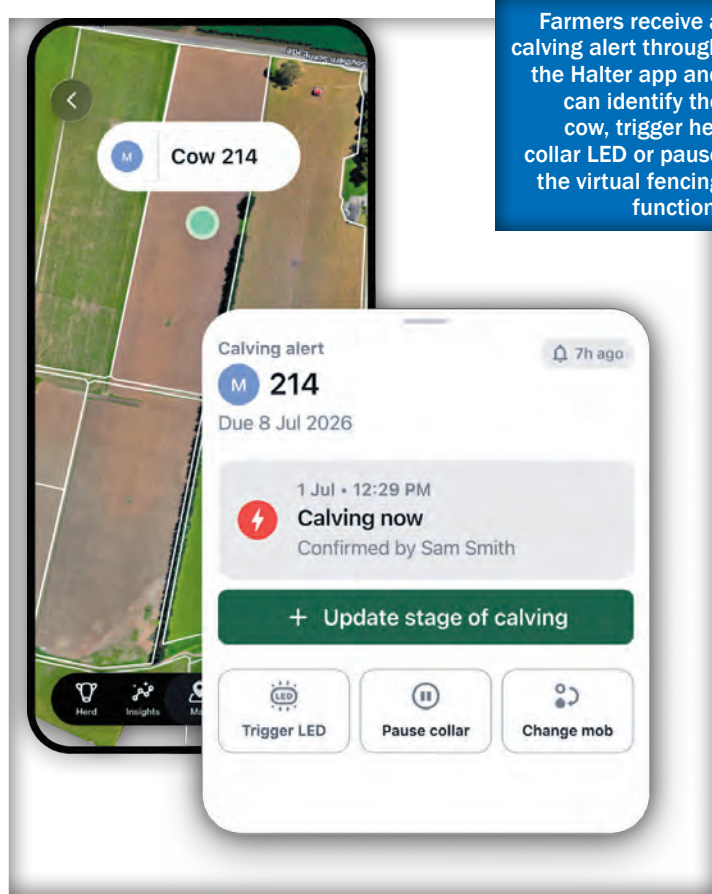
However, he believed the technology could potentially help identify cows requiring assistance.

"If you got the calving alert and you were to go and check her later and the cow hadn't calved, you'd probably know then that she'd been calving for that sort of period of time."

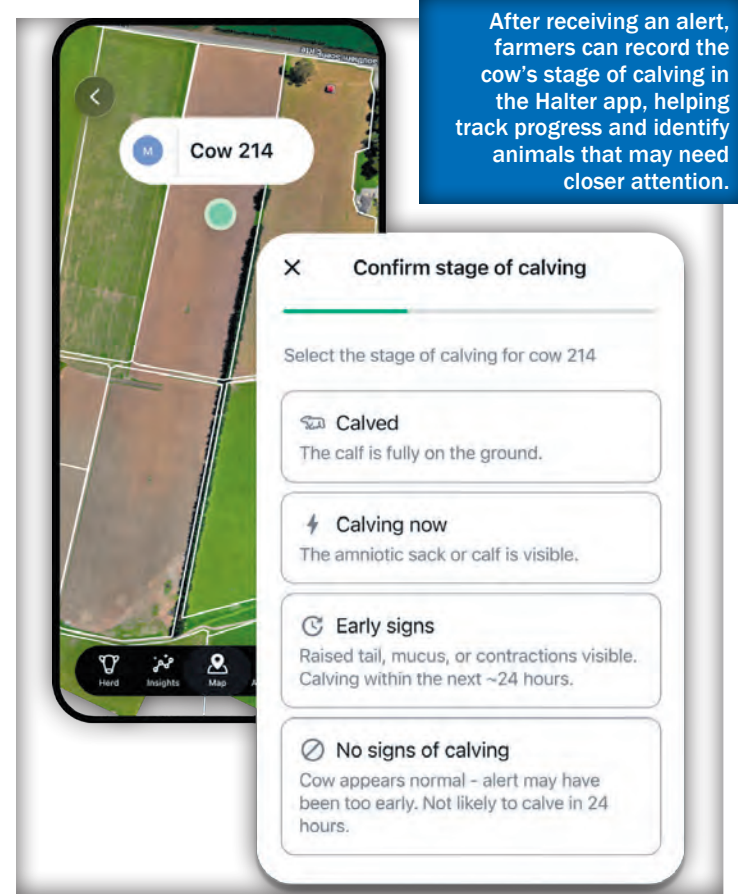
He said that could be particularly valuable for larger farms managing multiple mobs or staff.

Halter Director of Product Toby

Farmers receive a calving alert through the Halter app and can identify the cow, trigger her collar LED or pause the virtual fencing function.



After receiving an alert, farmers can record the cow's stage of calving in the Halter app, helping track progress and identify animals that may need closer attention.



Hurley said the technology was designed to complement farmers' existing calving routines rather than replace them.

"During the intensity of calving, every extra bit of visibility makes a real difference," Hurley said.

"Calving detection is designed to work alongside the routines farmers already trust, giving them another signal to help prioritise their time when they're out checking mobs."

Because the feature operates through existing Halter collars and the app, farmers do not need another wearable or piece of equipment.

Fisher, who has been dairy farming for about 35 years, said technology had transformed the way he operated.

"I still wonder how I even did it without Halter now."

But he did not believe

technology could replace good stockmanship.

"You've still got to be on farm, you've still got to do the physical stuff, but it is a tool that makes it so much easier."

"It makes you a better farmer. It's a tool in your hand that can teach you as you go."

For Fisher, who has three young children, the lifestyle benefit was one of the original reasons he adopted Halter.

He said the technology had since delivered improvements in mating and production, as well as allowing him to spend more time with his family.

And despite drawing on 35 years of farming experience, Fisher said the new calving feature had still proved valuable.

"Any head start or any jump-start that you can give to a cow on a day that she's calving has to be a win."

HERS NOT HIS

www.ruralguardian.com

9

Girls and their utes

Ruby Wallace

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I'm based in Ngatea, working in dairy farming and doing relief milking.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

A 2003 Toyota Hilux.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

It's super high, so getting into it is a bit of a mission! I have to put one leg in and do this sort of booty-bounce shuffle to get myself up there. It must look like a crack-up to anyone watching.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

"Get Back in Here" by DJ Felli.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROAD-TRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Does coffee count?

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Usually a few tools or the dog.



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Newly named Royal Agricultural Society Rural Ambassador Georgie Woods brings together her love of agriculture, community and photography. PHOTO SUPPLIED



Georgie Woods says A&P shows must protect their traditions while continuing to find new ways to attract the next generation. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Agriculture has been part of Georgie Woods' life since childhood, leading her to study at Lincoln University and pursue a career in the rural sector. PHOTO SUPPLIED



Traditional home, craft and produce competitions remain at the heart of A&P shows, alongside the introduction of new attractions. PHOTO GEORGIE WOODS



Georgie Woods was named the 2026 Royal Agricultural Society of New Zealand Rural Ambassador after being nominated by the Northern A&P Association. PHOTO GEORGIE WOODS



Fresh eyes on a proud tradition

Newly named Royal Agricultural Society Rural Ambassador Georgie Woods is determined to protect the traditions at the heart of A&P shows while helping them evolve for a new generation.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

For Georgie Woods, being named the 2026 Royal Agricultural Society Rural Ambassador was more than a personal achievement. It was recognition of the role young people can play in ensuring New Zealand's A&P movement has a future.

Nominated by the Northern A&P Association, Woods progressed through the competition before taking out the national title. Along the way, she met other young women involved in shows around the country and attended the RAS conference.

"It was a real honour," she says. "The other women in the competition were fabulous, so it was incredibly special to take out the title."

The experience has reinforced

her commitment to the movement.

"I keep telling the friends I joined the A&P committee with, that we are in it for the long haul now. We are not leaving."

The role also gives Woods a place on the national RAS Executive for a year - her first formal governance role and an opportunity she sees as both a privilege and a learning experience.

"I am excited to visit other shows around the country and see how they operate," she says.

"I want to help keep the traditions of A&P shows alive while also looking at how we can continue attracting people through the gates."

That balance between preserving tradition and embracing change is something the Northern A&P Association is already grappling with.

The traditional livestock, equestrian, produce, home and craft classes remain central, but shows must also be willing to try new ideas.

This year, the association is extending the excitement beyond show day through a country-themed shopfront competition involving Rangiora businesses.

On show day itself, the motorised furniture race will return for a second year.

The idea came from another young committee member, with Woods helping to market it.

"We really did not know how it would be received," Woods says. "It could have been a hit or a complete miss."

Four teams entered, but the event drew such a large crowd that it earned another outing.

"You have to be willing to try new things and accept that some of them might not work."

Not every experiment has succeeded. A Mr and Mrs Rangiora fashion-style competition trialled last year will not return.

"At least we tried it, and now we know."

Her enthusiasm for innovation does not mean abandoning tradition. Woods has entered the decorated cake section for the past three years and has gradually recruited friends to join her. This year, five or six are considering entering.

"I believe that if you want people to get involved, someone has to be prepared to start."

It reflects the creative side of a woman whose career might easily have taken a different path.

Woods considered broadcasting school and journalism, but agriculture ultimately won out. She grew up with parents who

worked in the sector and leased farms, then studied agriculture at Rangiora High School.

The school farm and passionate teachers helped cement her decision to attend Lincoln University.

"For students who do not come from farms, studying agriculture at school might be their only opportunity to learn about the sector and consider it as a career," she says.

"When I arrived at Lincoln, my eyes were opened to the enormous range of jobs and pathways within agriculture. You do not have to become a farmer or work on-farm every day."

Her own career reflects that diversity.

After nearly two years with Enviro Collective in Mid Canterbury, Woods returned home to join Waimakariri Irrigation Limited in June 2025 as an environmental advisor.

She now helps about 160 farmer shareholders navigate Farm Environment Plans, audits, reporting and regulatory requirements.

Woods sees herself partly as a translator, helping make complex obligations understandable and less intimidating.

"There is a great deal of regulation and compliance for farmers to navigate, and many different organisations are asking them for information," she says.

"I want our shareholders to feel comfortable picking up the phone and calling us when they have a question. It should not feel frightening or confusing."

The most rewarding part of the role is getting onto farms and building relationships with the people behind them.

That same interest in rural people and places runs through Woods' photography.

Given her first camera for her 13th birthday, she now photographs rural events and scenes, as well as families and engagements.

"When I get behind the camera, my mind stops. I become completely absorbed in what I am doing."

Whether she is behind a camera, working alongside farmers or helping launch motorised furniture down a showground track, Woods' interests come back to agriculture and community.

She hopes her year as Rural Ambassador will encourage other young people to step forward.

"A&P shows will only continue if another generation is willing to volunteer and bring new ideas with them," she says.

"We can preserve the traditions at the heart of our shows while still trying different things, reaching new audiences and making sure the A&P movement remains relevant."

Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmers Club member. Today we chat to South Waikato Young Farmers Club member Piper Monson.

1 What is the name of your club, and how long have you been a member?
I am a part of South Waikato Young Farmers, and I have been there for about four months now.

2 What has been the highlight for you of joining Young Farmers? What are the benefits and experiences that you feel have helped you most?
The highlight would be the community that I have built. Everyone is so welcoming.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?
I grew up farming, so it has just been such a big part of my life since day dot.

4 What is your job now? Tell us about your role, and what your journey has been like so far?
I currently work for Hynds Pipes. My role is in customer service and rural support, so I look after all our rural customers in my area and deal daily with civil contractors.

5 What do you think the future of farming will look like, and what would you like to see happening in New Zealand agriculture going forward?
It's hard to say what the future will entail, but I hope we continue to look after our farmers, as they are what keep us going.

6 What are your future plans?
I'll be honest, I have no idea what my future plans will be, but I'm hoping it's something great.

7 Who has been your biggest inspiration in agriculture, and why?
My father is my inspiration. When times have gotten tough on the farm, he has never given up, and when money has not been there, he has always made it work. It shows me that no matter what is going on, the right mindset and determination can get you a long way.

Nomination —

Being an all-round good member, showing up consistently each month to meetings and bringing charisma and energy with her! Along with keeping spirits up, Piper also fulfils baking requests to make sure pudding has been served before anyone heads out the door for the evening. Needless to say, her brownies and cheesecake go down a treat! It's great to have members with a bit of banter who really get amongst the club spirit.



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Championing farm safety



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

For Safer Farms ambassador Lindy Nelson, changing New Zealand's farm safety record starts with changing the conversation.

That thinking sits behind Safer Farms' Regional Champions initiative, which brings farmers themselves into the conversation about managing risk on farm. Rather than presenting themselves as health and safety experts, the Champions share their own experiences, lessons and practical changes in the hope other farmers can learn from them.

Current Regional Champions include Roger Barton, Chloe Butcher-Herries and George Dodson, with around 10 more going through training.

"The whole idea behind the Regional Champions is to really reframe safety and take it from being something that is done to farmers, because health and safety is often seen as something that's done to farmers, to be something we are doing with the farmers," Nelson said.

"It's like a farmer-to-farmer voice."

Nelson said the Champions were deliberately not positioned as health and safety experts.

Instead, they are farmers willing to share their own experiences, questions and changing approaches to risk.

"They understand the problem we're trying to solve, and they're really curious and brave to share their journeys of improvement."

It is part of a broader shift away from seeing health and safety as a separate compliance exercise.

Nelson said good safety should instead be the result of good farming practice, understanding



Safer Farms ambassador Lindy Nelson says the organisation's Regional Champions are helping shift farm safety from something "done to farmers" to practical conversations led by farmers themselves.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

the risks within a business and putting practical measures in place to manage them.

"The old view of safety was sort of that the onus is on the individual to get it right. It's a blame culture."

"What we're trying to say is, stuff goes wrong. How do we work collectively as farmers to understand the risk? How are we going to mitigate it? And if something goes wrong, how do we fail safely?"

The strength of the Champion model, she said, was that those conversations came from people who understood the realities of farming.

They understood the everyday pressures, changing conditions and risks that come with farming.

It also meant being open about solutions that farmers themselves might initially resist.

Nelson pointed to Butcher-Herries' experience with quad bike crush protection devices as an example. Initially sceptical, she agreed to trial one and openly shared both her concerns and what changed her mind.

A LifeGuard crush protection device fitted to a quad bike. Safer Farms is encouraging farmers to consider practical safeguards that can reduce the consequences when things go wrong.



"This isn't about us having all the answers," Nelson said.

"This is about us working through the solutions."

That same practical thinking sits behind Safer Farms' Be a Farmer for Longer campaign.

While serious accidents remain an obvious focus, the campaign is also targeting the less dramatic injuries that can steadily shorten a farming career.

These included sprains and strains, slips and trips, and gradual-onset injuries affecting areas such as backs, knees and shoulders.

They may not initially appear serious, but can leave a farmer unable to work for around a month on average while they recover, rehabilitate or wait for treatment.

Some of the solutions are deliberately simple.

Nelson said even thinking more carefully about footwear could reduce both accidents and long-term strain.

Farmers may need gumboots for milking or wet conditions, but wearing them all day for every job may not provide the support or grip needed for other tasks.

Another focus is reducing physical strain during calving and calf rearing.

Safer Farms has collaborated with DairyNZ, Gallagher and



A LifeGuard crush protection device provides a protective space around a quad bike rider in the event of a rollover. Farmers can currently access a 20 per cent discount on CPDs through Safer Farms' Safer Rides programme.

Kea Trailers to promote farmer-designed equipment developed through DairyNZ's sprains and strains work, including calf-pen gate systems designed to reduce awkward handling and double handling.

Safer Farms is also encouraging greater uptake of quad bike crush protection devices through its Safer Rides programme, with farmers currently able to access a voucher for 20 per cent off any model of CPD through the Safer Farms website.

For Nelson, all of those initiatives come back to the same principle.

Farm safety does not need to begin with another form or rulebook.

It can begin with farmers talking openly about risk, sharing what works and making everyday jobs safer before someone gets hurt.

For more information about Safer Farms, the Regional Champions, Be a Farmer for Longer and the Safer Rides CPD discount, visit saferfarms.org.nz.

Cash in on white gold

Growing great pasture this season doesn't have to break the bank.

In fact it could have the opposite effect, according to a veteran agronomist.

"Look after your white clover, and you'll not only harvest free nitrogen from the air, but improve feed quality," says Barenbrug pasture specialist Graham Kerr.

With urea fertiliser prices up to 50% higher than this time last year, and no sign of certainty returning to the market, farmer interest in white clover is skyrocketing, he says.

"Every tonne of clover dry matter grown fixes 25 kg of nitrogen per hectare. It's free, natural, sustainable and continual."

The recommended target for white clover is 30% of the total DM yield of a ryegrass pasture, but Graham says few farms have this much.

"Most have 10-20%. Some have less. There's no shortage of opportunity for improvement."

Which is why Barenbrug is increasingly being asked how existing clover populations can be

improved, he says.

Herbage testing is the most important first step. Clover is much more vulnerable to nutrient deficiencies than ryegrass, and has specific pH requirements.

"This is a practical, efficient way to find out if existing clover is getting what it needs to thrive. If it's not, you can improve it straight away by correcting any nutrient or pH issues."

Next, new pastures farmers need to follow two key rules at sowing to get it nice and thick.

First, clover seed is tiny, and must be sown at shallower depth than ryegrass.

"A lot of clover seed never stands a chance, as it's sown at more than 20 mm deep, and it's likely half of it will never come up."

Second, while it often germinates faster than ryegrass, clover then grows much slower because it spends its early life forming a taproot.

So that means it also needs to be sown away from ryegrass, instead of the common method of drilling

both seeds into the same row, at the same depth.

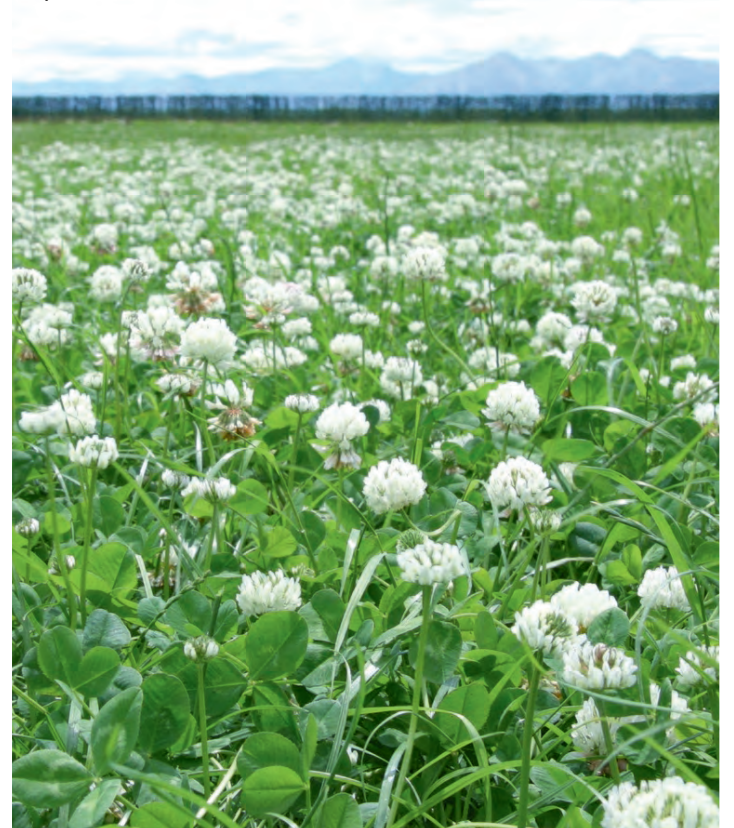
"Clover needs its own space, otherwise ryegrass swamps it," Graham says. "We need to get smarter in the drills we use for sowing. And I have seen great modifications to drills to improve clover."

"Just think, if you drill your clover with 20 kg/ha of ryegrass seed in 15 cm rows, you are in effect drilling 60 kg/ha of ryegrass within that drill row, and you expect clover to thrive? It will be smothered."

A Barenbrug trial comparing different sowing methods for perennial ryegrass and white clover showed that in the 12 months after sowing, broadcasting clover seed gave twice the clover yield than that produced by drilling it in the same row as the ryegrass.

"The value of the extra clover grown over the year is equivalent to \$50/ha of urea, plus another 2-3 times that in extra lamb growth or milksolids production."

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Don't wait for the accident



Claire Inkson

RURAL EDITOR

Chloe Butcher-Herries is happy to admit she was not an immediate convert to crush protection devices on quad bikes.

"I freaking hated them," the Hawkes Bay Safer Farms Regional Champion said.

For a sheep and beef farmer used to carrying dogs on the bike, one of her initial concerns was simply how practical the devices would be.

But when Safer Farms encouraged her to give one a go, she agreed.

"I thought, why not?"

She also filmed the experience, knowing plenty of other farmers would have the same reservations.

Now she has crush protection devices fitted to both of the farm's four-wheelers.

"I wouldn't look back."

For Butcher-Herries, that change of mind reflects exactly why she believes farmer-to-farmer conversations about safety matter.

"It's not really about saying farmers should listen to me. We're all doing the same thing.

"If another farmer sees something we're doing on our farm that they could put into practice

themselves, then that makes it worthwhile."

The 34-year-old farms with her wife, Makita, managing about 2,500 hectares across two properties near Dannevirke.

Her decision to become a Safer Farms Regional Champion was partly inspired by Lindy Nelson and the work of the Safer Farms team, but becoming a mother also sharpened her own thinking around risk.

"Now that I've got my daughter, I couldn't think of anything worse than not going home to her each day.

"I want to make sure I get home, but I also want my team and the wider farming community to get home as well."

Butcher-Herries said her own approach to farm safety had changed significantly over the past decade.

"Now you just feel wrong not wearing your helmet on the motorbike."

That shift is not only personal. As a farm leader, she said the behaviour of the person in charge sets the tone for everyone else.

"You can't expect your staff to wear a helmet if you're not as well.

"I love being out on the farm and seeing my staff wearing a helmet without giving those nudges or saying, 'Come on, don't forget to wear that'."

"I don't have to do that anymore."

The same applied when the crush protection devices were fitted, with no pushback from her younger team.



Safer Farms Regional Champion Chloe Butcher-Herries says practical safety changes, including helmets and crush protection devices, can make a real difference before an accident happens. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Her own scepticism had largely been practical.

Carrying dogs was one concern, but she found extending the dog mat slightly, while being careful not to affect the balance of the bike, solved much of the issue.

She has also been impressed

by the newer CPD designs, which have more flexibility than the solid steel structures some farmers may associate with rollover protection.

The bigger lesson, however, is not about any particular piece of equipment.

It is about acting before

something goes wrong.

Butcher-Herries has come off a bike during her farming career and knows how quickly a familiar situation can change.

It can be something as simple as travelling down the same track used every day, only to find the surface has become greasy.

"You think, 'I do this track every day, it'll be all right.'"

"You can get yourself into trouble very quickly."

A more serious incident involving one of her staff reinforced that message.

The young farm worker was following a bull along a road when the animal turned.

He got off the quad bike to try to move it back up the road, but the bull was faster and bowled him over.

His head hit the tarseal as the animal pushed into him.

He went to hospital and was off work for a month.

Butcher-Herries believes the outcome could have been far worse had he not been wearing a helmet.

"If he didn't wear his helmet, I'd be doing a pretty sad phone call to his family rather than him just going to the hospital."

Importantly, helmet use was already standard practice on the farm before the incident.

That is the point she wants other farmers to take from the experience.

"Don't wait for an accident to happen on your farm for you to change.

"Get onto it."



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Safer Farms Regional Champion and 2024 FMG Young Farmer of the Year George Dodson says practical safeguards and good training can help farmers “fail safely” when the unexpected happens. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Making it safe to fail



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

For 2024 FMG Young Farmer of the Year George Dodson, good farm safety is not about creating more paperwork.

It is about accepting that even capable, experienced people sometimes get things wrong, and making sure a mistake does not become a tragedy.

Dodson, now farming with his parents near Leeston where they 50:50 share milk 400 cows, is one of Safer Farms' Regional Champions. His interest in farm safety was shaped partly by experience working in both owner-operated and corporate farming environments.

Moving into a corporate farming environment exposed him to a much more structured approach to health and safety, with

stronger systems, processes and expectations around how work was carried out.

“I saw how much difference there was in health and safety, and I learnt heaps,” he said.

When he later returned to more owner-operator-style farms, safety was still important, but the systems were generally less formal.

For Dodson, the challenge is taking some of the useful lessons from corporate operations and applying them in a way that works for smaller farming businesses, without burying people in paperwork.

“I knew that being safe on the farm was important, but I was also sick of it being all about paperwork.

“It was about how I could help people understand how we can practically do it without drowning ourselves in paperwork for nothing.”

Dodson has developed a simple philosophy around managing farm risk: fail safely.

“For me, it’s about having a safeguard there, or a Plan B.”

Farmers often talk about common sense and operator

ability, he said, but neither can eliminate every risk.

“Sometimes we just have off days. Sometimes the weather isn’t what we think it is, or sometimes there’s a big hole that’s appeared from nowhere.

“It’s about having those backups in place so that if something doesn’t go right that we didn’t expect, then we can still fail without getting seriously injured or killing ourselves.”

On a quad bike, that could be as simple as chasing a cow, turning a corner and discovering there is less grip than expected.

Dodson uses LifeGuard crush protection devices on the farm’s quad bikes and said he had seen their value particularly while working on hill country.

“No one ever intends to go out there and get hurt, but sometimes things just happen that you don’t expect.”

His approach to safety also extends beyond preventing catastrophic accidents.

Dodson believes small changes to the way jobs are set up can reduce physical strain while often making a farm more efficient at the

same time.

In a previous cowshed, rather than carrying heavy test buckets of milk from newly calved cows around the shed, a system was set up to pump the milk out to the calf-milk trailer.

“It’s just thinking about how we do a lot of things on the farm.

“I think a lot of the time efficiency comes with doing things the right way and doing them safely as well.”

The same thinking applies to personal protective equipment.

Rather than expecting someone to hunt around the farm for earmuffs or safety glasses when a job needs doing, Dodson said PPE should be readily available where it is actually used.

“If someone’s rushing to do something, it still only takes them a quick second to put their earmuffs on, rather than having to look for 10 minutes and think, ‘Bugger it, I’ve just got to do this job,’ and do it without them.”

Making the safe option convenient can make a significant difference.

Training is the other half of the equation.

Dodson said young people entering agriculture should be properly taught how to carry out jobs rather than simply being expected to work things out for themselves.

“Think about the practical stuff and training and development of people. That’s going to be your biggest win.”

That means ensuring machinery has appropriate guards, teaching people how to operate equipment properly and continuing to develop their skills.

“Their upskilling is going to be massive, not only for their safety, but also their growth as a worker.”

He believes attitudes are changing, particularly among younger farmers, although there is still resistance to some safety messages.

For Dodson, the answer is not assuming accidents only happen to people who lack experience or common sense.

It is recognising that unexpected things happen in farming, and putting practical safeguards in place before they do.

“That’s why we have those fail-safes there.”

Safety lessons learned the hard way



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Roger Barton jokes that when it comes to farm safety, he does not bother with near misses.

"I don't do near misses. I do the real things."

The Wairarapa Safer Farms Regional Champion has the scars to back that up.

Across a lifetime in farming, Barton has had a shoulder reconstruction, two hip replacements, a full ankle replacement, handpiece injuries and a serious hand injury after putting a sickle through a knuckle.

"I've done a few A&Es. I'm a walking case."

But it is not simply the physical consequences that have changed the experienced Wairarapa farmer's attitude to risk.

It is what happens back on the farm when the person who should be doing the work suddenly cannot.

"When you're stuffed and you're at A&E, your jobs aren't getting done," he said.

Someone else has to step in, the basics get done but other work may be missed, and the cost quickly spreads beyond the injury itself.

"Invariably you forfeit work and

you forfeit income because you've got to pay them.

"Basically, if you'd taken a bit more care in the first instance, all those costs would never have been imposed on your business or your family."

Barton said the change in farming attitudes during his career had been significant.

When he started out there was little thought given to hearing protection, helmets or chainsaw safety. He spent years around chainsaws, post thumpers and noisy tractors before buying his first earmuffs.

He is now paying the price for that exposure.

Today, he said, safety was increasingly being treated as part of farming rather than an additional compliance exercise.

"Health and safety's just part of the other stuff we do. It's not separate. It's embedded in what we do."

Barton prefers the term "safety inclusive" rather than "safety first".

It means considering risk as part of planning the job, including whether the person doing it has the skills required.

On his family's farm, new employees rate their own competency across jobs including tractors, quad bikes, side-by-sides, chainsaws and stock work.

The exercise gives the employer an indication of where training may be needed, but Barton said its biggest value could simply be putting safety into a new worker's mind from their first day.

One young worker from the UK



Safer Farms Regional Champion Roger Barton says decades of farming have reinforced the importance of making safety part of everyday decisions on farm. PHOTO SUPPLIED

initially rated his quad-bike ability at six or seven out of 10. After about 10 days working in New Zealand conditions, he admitted he had seriously overrated himself.

"The employee has to know their limitations and the employer needs to understand the

limitations as well."

Sometimes that means knowing when to "put the handbrake on a job" because the necessary competency is not there.

Barton takes a similarly pragmatic view of farm vehicles.

Helmets matter, he said, but they

are only one part of the equation. Brakes, tyres, maintenance, terrain and weather can be just as important.

"A helmet is part of a whole parcel of things you have to do for your health and safety. It may not even be the most critical thing on that particular day, but it is the most visual."

Nor does he believe replacing every quad bike with a side-by-side automatically makes a farm safer.

On steep, wet country, a heavier side-by-side can create its own problems, particularly if it cannot climb a slippery track and then has to be manoeuvred back down.

The answer, he said, is choosing equipment appropriate to the job and conditions.

After years spent around farm safety policy and industry discussions, Barton remains a fan of practical solutions over complicated ones.

One of his quad bikes has a reversing beeper, a basic addition that immediately reminds the rider the machine is still in reverse.

"My brain likes simple interventions which make a difference."

For Barton, meaningful farm safety comes down to those everyday decisions: maintaining machinery, using the right equipment, understanding people's capabilities and knowing when a job needs to be reconsidered.

It is less about treating safety as a separate task and more about making it part of how the job is done.

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When the carpark reaches capacity



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR

Western Southland dairy farmer Kaylene Bennett has turned her own experience of reaching capacity into Kellogg research examining the mental load carried by rural women and the impact it is having on their wellbeing, careers and communities.

For Kaylene Bennett, the realisation that she could no longer keep going as she was came while sitting in a doctor's waiting room.

The dairy farmer, accountant and mother of five had reached what she now describes as capacity.

"I'm the kind of person that gives 110 percent to everything I do, and I just felt absolutely lost," Bennett said.

"I couldn't focus on things. It was, 'I'll get that done soon', or 'I'll do that tomorrow', but those times just weren't coming."

At the time, Bennett and her family were in the middle of calving at Beach Valley Dairies, near Tuatapere.

Her mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer, one daughter had broken her arm and needed surgery, while another had suffered complications following surgery on her leg.

There were repeated trips to Invercargill, the added pressure of dealing with ACC, and Bennett's husband was away working for part of that period.

"It was a perfect storm," she said.

The experience helped prompt Bennett's Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme research into the mental load carried by rural women.

Her report, *Is the "carpark" too full? Is the mental load of rural women affecting their everyday lives and how can we support it?*, examines the often unseen responsibility involved in managing farms, families, work and community commitments.

Bennett said there was an important distinction between being busy and carrying an excessive mental load.

"I actually quite enjoy being busy. It's productive and it's sometimes goal-focused. It's going from one thing to the next, achieving things and being involved in things," she said.

"But when it becomes an overwhelming mental load, it's a foggy brain and an inability to focus."

The load could include everything from meals and appointments to children, farm commitments and keeping track of what needed to happen next.

It could also include carrying

responsibility for the emotional wellbeing of others.

"You're considering the emotions of everyone else around you before you even load them up with more," Bennett said.

Her research drew 196 completed survey responses, as well as 15 interviews with women in rural sector leadership roles.

Of those who responded to the survey, 81 percent did not identify themselves as healthy on the Mental Health Continuum.

Bennett said the finding left her saddened.

"I think I was more sad about the fact that we've created a society that thinks this is okay."

Another finding showed only five percent of respondents placed themselves at the top of their priority list, while 61 percent put themselves in the bottom half.

"It's kind of like trying to run a car on empty," Bennett said.

Nearly three-quarters said they often or always had too many tasks to manage at once.

For Bennett, that reinforced one of the biggest lessons from her own experience.

She now has a reminder written

on the wall at home.

"The reason I'm not coping is because I'm at capacity."

"It's not around capability. It's capacity."

In rural communities, she said, women could easily find themselves taking on additional responsibilities simply because without someone stepping forward, opportunities might disappear.

"If I want my children to learn to swim, then I'll become a coach at swimming club, or I'll coach their netball team."

"If you want the children to have opportunities, sometimes you find yourself tied up in creating those opportunities."

Community and family commitments did not remove the work waiting elsewhere.

Bennett's research found women often compensated by starting earlier or working later.

"Women would typically start really early in the morning or keep going late at night just to try and organise the chaos," she said.

One of the most significant findings was that 60 percent of respondents had left paid

employment or a career to focus on their family or farm.

For some, farming was exactly where they wanted to be.

For others, geography, limited childcare and the difficulty of finding care flexible enough to fit farming hours restricted their choices.

One theme emerged strongly.

"I had a career, I got married, I went farming, we had kids, and somewhere along the way I lost who I was."

Bennett said women often put the needs of others ahead of their own, sometimes at the expense of their identity and career.

She said women needed to feel able to set boundaries and say no, but addressing mental load could not rest solely with the women carrying it.

A key issue was the difference between sharing tasks and sharing responsibility.

A partner might willingly do something once asked, but Bennett said the work of recognising what needed doing had already taken place.

"That thought process has already happened," she said.

"So that's already come through your carpark."

Bennett also wants the agricultural sector to recognise mental load as more than a personal wellbeing issue.

While it can be difficult to measure, she said there were clear implications for farm businesses.

"It's very much affecting people's wellbeing and absolutely their productivity, which would have a flow-on effect to profitability because people are not 100 percent working on their game if they've got 10 million things going on in their mind."

Nearly two years on from reaching her own capacity, Bennett said she was still working on finding the balance herself.

Women should not interpret reaching capacity as a personal failure, she said.

But she believes change needs to come from both industry and within rural communities.

"I think it comes from industry level, but it also comes from creating spaces for our grassroots women to go. 'It's okay, I'm doing a great job and I don't have to do all of that.'"



Western Southland dairy farmer Kaylene Bennett's Kellogg research explores the hidden mental load carried by rural women and the impact it can have on their wellbeing, careers and communities. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Farm or city – unnecessary cost is the enemy

COLIN HURST

As politicians ramp up rhetoric and roll out the policy ahead of the November election, most New Zealanders want to hear what their solutions are for getting the cost of living down.

Whether you're a farmer out in Staveland or you're living in the middle of Ashburton, we're all interested in cutting out things that unnecessarily add to costs.

In the last few years, a big focus of Federated Farmers has been to encourage central and local government to streamline and simplify resource management rules and regulations.

In short, less red tape means less cost.

When you add to farmers' costs, you're adding to the costs Kiwi families pay to put food on the table and undermining the competitiveness of our exporters.

It's in all our interests to find better ways of doing things.

I'll give you just one example of Federated Farmers' advocacy on this front.

In the last few months, Feds has been working with the Agricultural Aviation Association (NZAAA). There's only a few

hundred operators of topdressing planes and helicopters that spread fertiliser and pest control agrichemicals and they're frequently flying across council boundaries.

NZAAA executive officer Tony Michelle says the current regional and district plan rules covering his members are a bureaucratic nightmare. They vary significantly from district to district, and some of them are totally impractical.

He's been spending up to 50% of his working week dealing with regional and district plan changes and trying to get council officers and elected representatives to understand what's practical for the sector.

"You fight the same battle with 74 councils each time they get round to a review, and it all starts again from ground zero. There's no consistency," he said.

The current Government is making huge strides with its overhaul of the Resource Management Act, which over the past 30 years has become bloated and stifling — a gravy train for consultants and lawyers.

Feds has made detailed submissions on what would work better for our sector, and we're on the eve of new legislation that

will drastically cut the number of expensive resource consents, while still ensuring strong protections for the environment.

Now on our wish list for whoever forms the next government are 10 new national permitted activity standards within the first year of office.

A national standard means a clear set of conditions and rules. If they're complied with, delays and expense of getting a resource consent are avoided.

There are still strict protections for land and water, and if they can't be complied with, resource consent is needed.

Federated Farmers wants to see a national standard not just for fertiliser spreading, but for vegetable growing, gravel extraction from rivers to help stop flooding, for on-farm water storage, wetland restoration — and five other farm and food producing activities.

This drive by Feds for smarter ways of doing things and reducing costs extends into other areas too.

Driven by the Government's plans to get rid of regional councils by 2028, Ashburton and every other district have been deep in conversations recently on local government reorganisation.

Change like this is uncomfortable and challenging — but rates bills that consistently outstrip inflation, sometimes by a country mile, are uncomfortable too.

I'm proud of Feds' involvement in these discussions here in Canterbury and elsewhere. For us, the key principles have been around new unitary councils that acknowledge that big cities like Christchurch and provincial areas have different needs and priorities. New councils must preserve strong local representation and decision-making.

I'm three months into my role as Federated Farmers president. I've been on the national board for four years, so I know how busy the organisation is on multiple fronts — but suffice to say things have got a whole lot busier for me!

It's humbling and gratifying that people from all sectors and walks for life have opened doors of welcome to me as the new Feds president.

I've been around the traps for a while and I've built up a wide array of contacts and networks here where I farm in Canterbury, and in other regions. I'm making full use of those links to help Federated Farmers achieve better things



Colin Hurst, Federated Farmers national president.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

for farming families and rural communities.

Primary production is the engine room of our economy and merchandise exports — when farmers do well, it's good for all New Zealand.

I was passing through Christchurch airport the other day in my Feds branded shirt and I actually got a cheer from a group of young farmers who clearly back our mission. It gave me such a lift!

So if you see me out and about — come up and say hello. I'd love to hear your ideas and feedback.

Colin Hurst is Federated Farmers national president



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More than a seat at the table

Women are already leading across rural New Zealand, says Kellogg scholar Hinehou Timutimu. The challenge is making sure their contribution is recognised, their voices are heard and participation translates into genuine influence.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

A trip to Thailand last year planted a question in Hinehou Timutimu's mind.

Speaking at an APEC event focused on women's empowerment, she was exposed to conversations about the Aotearoa Plan of Action and the work being undertaken across APEC economies to increase women's economic participation and leadership.

What struck Timutimu was not only what she heard, but what she realised she had not heard back home.

"The other economies were across the Aotearoa Plan of Action. It was very new to me," she says.

It left her wondering what women's economic empowerment looked like on the ground in New Zealand's rural sector.

"I wasn't aware of where that work was happening or how it was being executed."

That question eventually became the starting point for Timutimu's 2026 Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme research project. Not one more acre of Māori Land. Not one more voice lost.

Originally intending to take a much broader look at women's empowerment in agriculture, she quickly realised the subject was too large for one Kellogg project.

Instead, she narrowed her focus to something she had experienced herself: the role networks play in women's participation, leadership and ability to have influence within agriculture.

"I wanted to understand how women were engaging within those networks and, if they were engaging, were they being heard?"

"Quite often you can sit in these groups, but it doesn't mean to say that you're being listened to."

For Timutimu, that distinction is important.

Participation alone is not enough.

Her research explored the experiences of 16 women from across Aotearoa's agricultural sector, including wāhine Māori, and found networks could provide connection, learning, opportunity and belonging.

But getting through the door was only part of the story.

Women also needed the confidence, opportunity and support to make their voices count.

For rural women in particular, participation can begin with overcoming some very practical barriers.

Timutimu knows those pressures well from the dairy sector.

A woman might be raising children, rearing calves, managing the farm administration and potentially working another job

to supplement the household income.

She may also have recently moved into an unfamiliar district for a new season, without family or an established support network nearby.

Then there is the simple logistics of getting to an event.

An hour's drive each way quickly becomes difficult when fitted between school or daycare drop-offs, farm work, afternoon pick-ups and getting dinner on the table.

"You become very selective about which ones you can attend."

The same pressures emerged repeatedly among the women Timutimu interviewed, including those who had since moved away from dairy but remembered clearly what it was like when their children were young.

There is another largely unseen layer too.

Rural communities themselves depend heavily on that same pool of time and energy.

Parents coach the junior sports teams, fundraise for the school pool, drive children to activities and provide the extra adults needed for small rural schools to offer experiences that might otherwise be impossible.

It is work Timutimu believes deserves another name.

Leadership.

"Those things can look quite small individually, but they make up the bigger picture."

"It's about relationships, and a lot of those relationships aren't formal."

"They're things that we just do. But they're never really recognised as actually these people are leading."

It is one of the central ideas to emerge from her research.

Leadership does not always come with a board position, a title or a seat at a governance table.

Sometimes it looks like the woman organising the fundraiser, coaching the netball team, connecting people in her district or quietly making sure someone else gets the support they need.

That relational leadership also feeds into another word frequently used to describe rural women: resilience.

Timutimu believes resilience is too often viewed as something an individual possesses.

Her research led her towards a more collective interpretation.

"It takes a village to raise a child. It's that kind of holistic, collective way of looking at resilience."

She sees it playing out in the life of her own daughter-in-law, who has two young children at kōhanga while juggling the demands of farm life.

People swap pick-ups, look after children, help each other get through calf rearing and share the load around weekend sport.

"They're always helping each other and always talking to each other."

"Without that collectiveness and coming together as one to help each other no matter what, I think it would be very, very challenging."



Hinehou Timutimu, named the 2026 Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year earlier this year, says her Kellogg research reinforced the importance of ensuring women are not only represented in rural networks, but that their voices are heard. PHOTO SUPPLIED

The title of Timutimu's report reflects another woman whose leadership has had a profound influence on her thinking.

After watching the film about Dame Whina Cooper, Timutimu was struck by her unwavering commitment to protecting Māori land.

Dame Whina's call of "not one more acre of Māori land" became the inspiration for Timutimu's own call: "not one more voice lost."

"A lot of my cohort thought I was talking about land," she says.

"But it wasn't about land."

"It was about a person who believed in something and was so committed to it throughout her life."

Timutimu saw in Dame Whina the power of knowing what you stand for and continuing despite resistance.

"She believed in what she believed in and she just drove that her whole life."

For Timutimu, protecting voice became the parallel.

"That's what I wanted to achieve through my research project, that women didn't feel their voice was being lost."

"Dame Whina Cooper's drive was not to lose land. My take on it was not to lose voice."

While her research identifies barriers, Timutimu is optimistic about the pathways now available for women interested in formal leadership and governance.

She has completed governance training herself and says there is an increasing range of programmes, scholarships and shorter courses that allow women to explore whether governance might be right for them.

But perhaps her biggest takeaway from Kellogg was not about programmes at all.

It was about belief.

"Women all in themselves, they all know. It's just having that extra confidence for them to keep going."

Since becoming the first Māori recipient of the Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year award earlier this year, Timutimu has found herself encouraging other women to step forward.

She tells friends they could be next.

Their instinctive response is often the same.

"No, no, it's not me."

Timutimu challenges that self-doubt.

"I say, 'No, I'm serious. It could be you.'"

Looking back at the previous

decade of the award, Timutimu found Māori women had been among the finalists, but none had taken the title before her.

Winning changed the way she viewed her own responsibility.

"I've opened that doorway."

"For me, I feel I have an obligation to encourage or to create that curiosity for more."

She describes wanting to become a "lighthouse" for other Māori women, encouraging them to recognise the opportunities available to them and the value of their own voices.

It is a sentiment reinforced by one of the women she interviewed, National MP for Taranaki-King Country and Deputy Speaker Barbara Kuriger, a former Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year.

The message Timutimu took from that conversation was straightforward: know your purpose and know your why.

For Timutimu, part of that purpose is encouraging women who may not yet see themselves as leaders.

"I want to be that person to encourage and to give people that belief."

Her message to them is simple. "You have a voice, you can be listened to, and it is possible."

The tribe I made on purpose

LEANNE BLAKELOCK

As I wrote about in Calf Chronicles last month, every Friday, we have lunch with two other farming couples.

We usually take turns hosting at each other's homes. It is not elaborate, yet it has been one of the greatest gifts in helping me properly settle and thrive in farming life.

I often say I am lucky to have found my tribe and experience that level of connection. I am, but some of that luck was actually intentional.

I met one of the ladies at a course. We shared a bond over what was happening in our lives, but it was also like being a child in the sandpit. I looked across, thought, "She seems pretty cool," and decided I was going to make her my friend and invited her to lunch.

The other lady and her husband were accounting clients, I'd only met them twice. My husband and I were in Taupō, they farmed in South Waikato. In a moment of social courage, I thought, "stuff it," phoned them up and invited them to dinner. And they came!

And we went from there, eventually the South Waikato couple moving to Taranaki. The husbands did not get much choice in their arranged friendship, and they appear to have accepted it remarkably well.

Those awkward initial invitations became weekly lunches, shared food, borrowed equipment,

emergency favours and somewhere safe to release steam. During calving, these may be the only people outside our farms we see regularly.

One year, when we were really struggling on farm, one of the husbands used a long-awaited day off to turn up and milk for us. No fuss. No grand announcement. In his usual nonchalant way, he was simply there. And I don't think I can ever say how grateful I am for that day. We were spent, and he just turned up when he should have been enjoying his day off and really saved our bacon.

That is what a tribe looks like.

These are the seen-and-be-seen relationships. We can celebrate the good without shrinking it and talk about the hard without polishing it first.

After more than a decade volunteering in suicide prevention and community wellbeing, I know this to be true, that people need people.

The science agrees. Strong social relationships are linked with better mental and physical health. Social support helps buffer stress, and a sense of belonging improves our ability to cope. The quality of our relationships matters more than simply how many people we know.

It's too easy to say or think:

"We don't have time."

"That's all very well for you. I don't have those kinds of friends."

"I wouldn't know who to invite."

Fair enough. Farming is relentless, and friendships do not

arrive fully formed. Rome was not built in a day, and neither is a tribe.

Perhaps the real question is not whether we have time for these lunches, but whether we have time not to. If we do not spend time practising the things that keep us healthy, we should be prepared to spend time dealing with what happens when we become unwell.

Eventually, the body wins. Every time.

So, risk being awkward. Then keep turning up until it becomes normal. A good tribe brings practical help, honest perspective, empathy on the terrible days and people who are genuinely pleased when things go well.

Together, we share the load,

learn from each other and grow through it, becoming stronger farmers, better people and far more capable than any of us would be on our own. That's a tribe.

LeAnne Blakelock is a Taranaki-based dairy farmer and accountant, and founder of the social media platform, the Calf Chronicles.



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Go hard or go home:

Rural school raffles Ranger for new playground



Ashley Rakahuri School pupils get behind the PTA's ambitious Ford Ranger raffle fundraiser for a new playground. From left: Emmy Gregory-Hunt, Brody Gregory-Hunt, Stevie Dyer, Lucy Young, Zoey Gascoyne, Milla Dyer, Evie Clifford and Beaudan Clifford.

Ashley Rakahuri School PTA

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Ford Team Hutchinson Ford

playground," she said.

"We just thought, we can't have that."

The existing playground is more than 30 years old and about half of it was removed two years ago because of safety issues.

While the remaining equipment is still safe, Clifford said it increasingly required repairs and continuing to patch it up made little financial sense.

"We'd be patching it up for years and years and it would just be a big money pit."

Replacing it is also about making the playground accessible to all of the school's children.

Ashley Rakahuri School currently has pupils who use wheelchairs and cannot properly access the existing bark-covered playground.

The new design is expected to include wheelchair-accessible equipment, ramps and suitable matting, while retaining the adventurous feel of a rural school playground.

"We still want it to have that country adventure playground feel," Clifford said.

"We still want it to have lots of climbing."

The concept currently with designers includes a large tower and climbing equipment, with the final design expected soon.

Ashley Rakahuri School currently has 184 pupils, with its roll expected to reach about 195 by the end of the year.

Clifford describes it as a tight-knit community school with strong intergenerational connections.

Her own son is a second-generation pupil, following his father and his father's siblings through the school, and many other local families have similar histories.

The idea of raffling a vehicle came from another PTA member, who had seen a similar fundraiser run for the Twizel Medical Centre.

The group then approached Team Hutchinson Ford to see whether it could secure a Ranger at a price that would make the numbers work.

From there, Clifford said, the PTA simply ran with the idea.

It has not been a small undertaking.

Five parents make up the raffle subcommittee and Clifford estimates they are collectively putting in more than 20 hours of administration each week.

But she said concentrating the effort into one intensive fundraiser made more sense than asking families to repeatedly support smaller initiatives throughout the year.

"The amount of work that goes into lots of little fundraisers is huge," she said.

"If we could do this massive pressure over three months as opposed to lots of little ones over the year, that was the idea."

The PTA was also conscious of cost-of-living pressures when setting the \$40 ticket price.

"We understand that because we're all families too. Forty dollars is not a little amount of money. That's coming out of families' back pockets."

Limiting the raffle to 5000 tickets, rather than selling 10,000 at a lower price, was a deliberate decision to give entrants better odds.

The PTA hopes a sell-out could raise around \$100,000 towards the playground and potentially allow construction to begin next year.

Around 3400 tickets have already sold, leaving 1600 to go in the final weeks.

The raffle closes on September 24, with the winners drawn on September 25.

For Clifford, getting those final tickets sold would mean more than reaching a fundraising target.

It would mean that after five years of sausage sizzles, raffles and countless volunteer hours, the school's children could finally see the playground their community has been working towards become a reality.



After five years of fundraising for a new playground, Ashley Rakahuri School parents realised they were facing a frustrating problem.

They were raising money, but inflation was rising almost as quickly.

"We were finding we were only making enough money to combat inflation," PTA chairperson Emma Clifford said.

"Every year that we weren't making the money we needed, inflation was kicking in and what we were raising was only covering that."

So the small North Canterbury school decided it was time to go big.

Its PTA has launched the biggest fundraiser it has ever attempted, a nationwide raffle with a brand-new 2026 Ford Ranger XLT Double Cab 3.0D 4WD, valued at up to \$74,000, as first prize.

There are just 5000 tickets available at \$40 each, with a \$2000 second prize and \$1000 third prize.

For Clifford and the other parents behind the fundraiser, it was a case of "go hard or go home".

The school has already raised around \$65,000 towards replacing its playground over the past five years, but Clifford said the pace of fundraising meant some of the children whose parents were doing the work could leave before they ever got to enjoy it.

"We were putting all this work into fundraising and our own children weren't even going to be able to benefit from the

Trust: the starting point



Eva Harris

The thing is, it doesn't matter if we are talking about women's health, driver behaviour or the day-to-day decisions made on farm – ultimately, we are just talking about the thought processes people go through when making decisions.

As a society, we often want regulators or authority figures to intervene when we think a decision is not in the best interests of the individual or the wider community. We create regulations, laws and guilt-inducing posters to get people to do the "right" thing.

But you can't just go in there and tell people what to do (trust me, I've tried). If we, as a society, need people to change their thought processes, we first need enough trust for them to hear us.

We forget they probably have a very real reason that serves their own purpose for doing what they do, and they won't simply change because we ask nicely or make a rule. We also forget that the most effective changes we want to see are driven by the people doing it. When people make the "right" choices for their own reasons, then we all win.

So much of this process comes down to who delivers the messaging recipients may not want to hear. My middle-aged male farmer boss (while an expert in facilitation) will get as much traction with those minority women to get a smear test as an

Once upon a time, I was sent to a Management 101 course to learn how to do the job I was meant to already be doing. Over lunch, I met a lovely lady who managed a team supporting minority women to engage with women's health services. She spoke about how a core part of their job was simply chatting with small groups of ladies within their own communities, creating safe spaces with women who understood them and their backgrounds, breaking down the educational, social and cultural barriers preventing them from seeking these services.

It got me thinking that my role was actually not that dissimilar. So much of what we do revolves around a good yarn over a cuppa tea and getting to know the people we work with. Who would have thought working with Mid-Canterbury farmers would have so much in common with women's phee phees?

Different communities, different conversations—but the same starting point: trust.



inexperienced Green Party-voting townie will have with a reluctant farmer to change the way they farm.

We are entering a time of unprecedented overhaul of our local government entities who will oversee a fundamental change of our resource management system. We will have new approaches, tools, environmental standards and regulatory bodies, along with a whole new team of people taking care of all this.

New structures may change who

holds the clipboard, but they won't change the basic human equation: people are more likely to listen, engage and change when they trust the person and the system.

Who will they be? Will they be ready to listen to the needs of their communities? Will the new local government structures bring decision-makers closer to the people affected—or simply redraw the boxes on the organisational chart? Even worse, will splitting into multiple entities create unnecessary duplication and make

it harder to engage?

Whatever it is we end up doing, I just hope these new entities see building trust within their communities as a core function they must deliver on.

"He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata." (What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.)

Eva Harris is Principal Environmental Advisor for Enviro Collective

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Growing the value of precision dairy farming

Wānaka Show looks to next era with Halter partnership



Halter New Zealand Country Director Josh Townsend says the Wānaka A&P Show partnership is a natural fit for the agri-tech company and its South Island farming customer base. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Halter's site at the 2026 Wānaka A&P Show proved a busy meeting point for farmers, customers and the company's team. Halter will return with a bigger presence as title partner in 2027.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

After attracting the biggest crowd in its history, the Wānaka A&P Show is heading into its 90th anniversary with a new title partner and a clear message: bigger is not necessarily better.

More than 44,000 people attended the two-day show in March, around 10 percent more than organisers had anticipated, while an independent economic impact assessment found the event generated an estimated \$19.3 million in additional spending across Wānaka, the Upper Clutha and Queenstown Lakes region.

Now, New Zealand agri-tech company Halter has come on board as title partner for the milestone 2027 event, which will be held on March 12 and 13.

Upper Clutha A&P Society chair Keith Cooper said the partnership was not driven by financial necessity, but by a shared focus on farming and agricultural innovation.

"It wasn't so much about the financial side, it was about a natural match with a partner that is very farmer focused," Cooper said.

The society established its AgriExchange site several years ago to provide a dedicated area for businesses showcasing on-farm technology. Since then, it has developed into what Cooper describes as an agricultural technology hub within the

showgrounds.

With Halter now offering technology relevant to hill and high country farming, Cooper said the partnership felt like "a match made in heaven."

"They were a great fit for where we are trying to encourage that part of the show to go."

Halter New Zealand country director Josh Townsend said the company had long admired the show and stepped up its involvement significantly in 2026.

"We decided we wanted to have a real presence there and it was massively successful for us," Townsend said.

"We have a pretty big customer base in the region and, more broadly, across the South Island. When the opportunity came up to become the naming rights partner and really get behind it, we jumped at it."

Townsend said Wānaka's strong farming audience made the partnership a natural fit.

"It reinforces that it is very much a farm-focused show. It's also an opportunity for a large portion of lower South Island farmers to get out, connect and catch up with their peers."

Halter will have a larger site at the 2027 show, with a focus on giving farmers and customers somewhere to connect with the team, along with what Townsend hinted would be some "exciting announcements".

For Cooper, maintaining the show's agricultural identity is increasingly important as its audience grows.

The society has been deliberately prioritising rurally connected exhibitors and strengthening the traditional A&P component of the event, while also using the show to connect urban visitors with



Record crowds attended the 2026 Wānaka A&P Show, with more than 44,000 people through the gates and an estimated \$19.3 million generated in additional regional spending.

farming.

A new farm production demonstration planned for 2027 will include activities such as sheep shearing, wool spinning, cow milking, cheese making and meat boning.

"It's so important to us to demonstrate where people's food and clothing come from," Cooper said.

"We're showcasing what farmers do, helping expose farmers to new technology, and demonstrating to

urban visitors what happens on farm and where their food comes from."

Cooper said the show's continued success came from constantly evolving its offering, including introducing new attractions and improving how visitors move through the grounds. But its location remains an undeniable advantage.

"We're in the high country next to a lake, and I think that's the bit that can never be forgotten."

Despite this year's record crowd, Cooper said organisers were not chasing another attendance record in 2027.

The show is already close to capacity for exhibitors and some livestock sections, while adding too many more visitors could affect the experience.

"We're not setting out to grow the show every year," he said.

"We're setting out to improve it, enhance it and offer something different."

The full picture of farming: Why balanced storytelling matters

KATHRYN WRIGHT

Our farmers work every day to maintain healthy soils, protect waterways, and care for animals — often under intense regulatory, financial, and climatic pressure. Yet online, the public often sees only a narrow slice of this reality.

Selective images of muddy paddocks, wet weather events, or isolated moments taken out of context circulate widely, shaping perceptions in ways that feel deeply unfair to the people who live this work. I've seen our own animals basking in mud, with dry, accessible green grass just metres away.

Most farms have dry paddocks, carefully planned grazing systems, and wintering strategies designed to minimise impact — we have to. Mud happens — just as mess happens in any workplace — but it is not the whole story.

The issue is not environmental concern itself, which is essential, but unbalanced storytelling that sometimes paints farmers as careless or cruel. This imbalance has consequences. Rural morale is low, and many farmers report distress, anxiety, and a sense of being judged by people who have never set foot on a farm.

Honesty matters: Not every farmer is perfect

It's important to acknowledge a simple truth: not every farmer gets it right. Just as in healthcare, teaching, or construction, a small minority fall short of best practice. But I've always said that their actions should never define an entire profession.

Most farmers are deeply committed to animal welfare and environmental stewardship. They invest in riparian planting, soil testing, effluent management, and improved wintering systems. They innovate constantly, often without recognition. The public deserves to see this side of farming too — the everyday competence, care, and pride that rarely makes headlines.

Why positive storytelling is essential

Negative imagery spreads quickly because it is simple, emotional, and easy to sensationalise. But positive stories are powerful when they are personal, visual, and consistent. When farmers share their everyday reality — good grass covers, healthy stock, thoughtful planning — it builds trust and counters misinformation.

Highlighting good practice isn't "PR spin", it's being accurate, and showing the other side of the story. It's also a form of community care. When farmers see each other celebrating good work, it lifts morale and reinforces a sense of

shared purpose. It can also be held up as a good example to those farmers who maybe do need to lift their game.

Algorithms shape public perception

Social media algorithms reward whatever content is posted most frequently, shared most actively, and engaged with most emotionally. Activist groups and individuals understand this well. When negative farming images are uploaded repeatedly, algorithms learn to push them forward, creating a distorted sense of reality.

That's why farmers need to feed the system with truthful, balanced content — everyday photos, clear explanations of good practice, and real-life examples of responsible farming. The more positive stories entering the algorithm, the more they appear in public feeds, shifting perception back toward reality. This ensures that digital platforms reflect the full picture, not just the loudest fragments.

Practical ways farmers can show good practice

- Everyday paddock photos — authentic images of grass cover, stock condition, and seasonal work.
- System explainers — short posts or videos showing rotational grazing, wintering plans, feed budgeting, or waterway



protection.

- Small wins — celebrating a new shelter belt, a well-managed break, or a healthy calf crop.
- Farmer profiles — spotlighting local champions who quietly excel.
- Community hashtags — using #NZFarming, #RuralLife, #GoodFarmPractice to amplify visibility.
- Open farm days — inviting urban families to see real farming builds empathy and understanding.
- Mental health stories — sharing experiences safely to reduce stigma and strengthen community.
- Rural organisation partnerships — collaborating with Beef + Lamb NZ, DairyNZ, Federated Farmers, Rural Support Trust.
- Share and celebrate each other's good practice stories — this is what changes the algorithm.

Rebuilding rural morale

Positive storytelling isn't just about public perception — it's

about farmer wellbeing. Seeing your industry represented fairly is grounding. Seeing peers share pride in their work is uplifting. And seeing the public respond with appreciation is encouraging. Rural communities thrive when they feel seen, valued, and understood.

Toward a more balanced conversation

Environmental care matters. Climate resilience matters. Animal welfare matters. But balanced conversation matters too. We can acknowledge challenges in farming without vilifying farmers. We can push for improvement without ignoring the good work already happening. The future of farming depends on collaboration, not conflict. And collaboration begins with honest, visible, everyday stories from the people who know farming best.

*Kathryn Wright
Rural Mental Health
Professional and Educator
www.kathrynwright.co.nz*



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Women in horticulture want a fair go, not a leg up



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR

Women make up around 40 per cent of New Zealand's horticulture workforce, but new research suggests many are still working harder than their male counterparts to be heard, recognised and given the same opportunities.

And while women want change, they are not necessarily asking for special treatment.

Independent research commissioned by Women in Horticulture found 80 per cent of women had experienced discrimination during their careers because of their gender, compared with 28 per cent of men.

Women in Horticulture project manager Stephanie Wrathall said the figure was significant, but the response women wanted was more nuanced than simply creating women-only initiatives.

"I know that 80 per cent experiencing discrimination looks like a big number, and obviously it is," Wrathall said.

"But I think within that we've got to be aware that how women want this dealt with is mostly very cautious.

"They don't want to stick their heads above the parapet. They want to get the job done, and get the job done well."

The research, undertaken by independent research agency Scarlatti, drew on 244 survey responses and 34 in-depth interviews with women and men across the horticulture sector.

Women described having to arrive over-prepared to be taken seriously, seeing their ideas overlooked until repeated by male colleagues, being excluded from using machinery or equipment they were capable of operating, and facing comments about their appearance, capability or pregnancy.

Wrathall said many women were not asking for additional advantages.

"Some simply want the barriers removed. They're not asking for anything extra, they just don't want to have to work harder to get to the same place."

The research also identified differences in the career pathways of women and men.

Women were also considerably more likely to take career breaks, with 64 per cent having done so compared with 41 per cent of men, particularly for parenting.

The research suggests those breaks can have a significant effect on career progression. Nearly three-quarters of women said personal commitments affected their careers, with caregiving responsibilities emerging as the biggest personal commitment barrier for women.

The report highlighted the importance of supporting women before, during and after parenting,



Women in Horticulture project manager Stephanie Wrathall says the research shows women are not asking for special treatment, but for clearer career pathways and the removal of barriers that can make progression harder. PHOTO SUPPLIED

including keeping people connected to their workplaces during career breaks and providing flexible pathways back into work.

Career breaks can flow on to challenges in women taking up leadership positions.

Just 9 per cent of women surveyed had served on boards, compared with 41 per cent of men, despite 32 per cent of women saying they wanted to move into governance roles.

Women were also less likely to have received leadership or management training once in the workforce, with 54 per cent of women reporting they had received this training compared with 67 per cent of men.

Gender itself was identified as a barrier to career development by 39 per cent of women compared with just 3 per cent of men, with women commonly reporting their contribution was not valued as highly as that of male colleagues.

One of the starkest findings was the gap between women's experiences and how those experiences were perceived by others.

Fifteen of the 20 women interviewed had personally experienced gender-related challenges. Yet eight of the 13 men who answered the question said they did not see women facing particular challenges within horticulture.

The research suggested some gender-related issues were linked to traditional attitudes, with interviewees commonly identifying older generations as one source of the challenges women experienced.

However, the report cautioned against assuming generational change alone would solve the problem, noting younger people could also hold gender biases and that more inclusive workplace cultures and greater awareness were needed across the industry.

Despite the barriers, women remain strongly committed to horticulture.

Sixty-nine per cent of women surveyed said they intended to stay in the industry, while a further 30 per cent were unsure and just 1 per cent said they planned to leave.

Wrathall said that was an

important part of the story.

"They like being in horticulture. I think that's the positive sign. Even though there's that big number around discrimination, there's still about 70 per cent that want to stay in horticulture."

The research also challenged assumptions about what supporting women should look like.

Of the women interviewed about targeted support, some saw value in initiatives such as mentoring and improving the visibility of opportunities, while others worried women-only programmes could reinforce perceptions that women needed extra help to succeed or had progressed because of their gender rather than merit.

Instead, the most commonly requested support was greater visibility of development and career progression opportunities, identified by 52 per cent of women.

Networking opportunities were also wanted by 52 per cent, followed by mentoring at 51 per cent, training opportunities at 48 per cent and encouragement from leaders at 46 per cent.

The report concluded there was no single experience of being a woman in horticulture, identifying four broad journeys ranging from women who had experienced discrimination and benefited from support to those who had not experienced gender-related barriers and did not believe targeted support was necessary.

For Wrathall, that reinforces the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all response.

"When they're looking at things like moving into leadership, it's really about career progression and clear communication about what that pathway could be."

The challenge for horticulture, the research suggests, is not convincing women they belong in the industry.

It is ensuring they have the same opportunity to progress once they are there.

Women and others working across the horticulture sector can join Women in Horticulture by completing the membership form on the Women in Horticulture section of the United Fresh website.

No need for name tags

ERIN NEALE

Rural accounting isn't a career known for its social calendar, but I've recently found myself at a few networking events. There were name tags, stainless steel urns of hot coffee and, of course, allocated mingling time.

I appreciate that for many, the thought of compulsory social interaction sounds like a waking nightmare. But anyone who knows me will tell you I'll rarely turn down a coffee and a chat. For me, networking is a chance to connect with other rural professionals — bankers, farm advisors, accountants, lawyers — those who share a passion for agribusiness and, most importantly, for the people in it.

As farmers, you live and breathe your job — literally. There's no clocking out at 5pm because you live where you work. Because of this, farming can at times start to feel like you're in a bubble. Now, most of the time, that bubble is your happy place, right? You've chosen the rural lifestyle because it's what you enjoy.

But sometimes, the pressure in that bubble starts to build. It can feel like you're constantly navigating weather events, environmental factors, staffing troubles, financial pressures, succession decisions — you know this. Having the right people around you won't eliminate those problems, but it does mean

you don't have to navigate them alone. That's why it's important to build a support system before you need it.

One difference between farming and other workplaces: there isn't necessarily a colleague sitting a few metres away. There's no automatic morning tea, no water cooler conversation, and no person at the next desk to bounce an idea off. Sometimes you need to be a little more deliberate about creating those conversations. So, what does networking look like for a farmer? Do you picture sitting in a windowless conference room? Or do you picture chatting with a neighbour over the fence, yarning with the stock agent at the yards, or talking with the sales associate at your local farm supply store? Because the latter is networking — it's just a different flavour.

Start with the fellow farmers in your circle. They're the ones who make you realise the struggles you're having aren't unique to you but are simply part of farming. They may have had the same experience as you, but even if they haven't, they'll have practical insights to share because they understand your situation.

Your support system will also include people like me (lucky!) — the rural professionals you've aligned yourself with. We see your business through a different lens from your boots-on-the-ground neighbour and can offer advice, challenge your thinking or provide

an alternative perspective when you need it.

Arguably the most important people of all are your family and the friends you have chosen. These are the people who will support you from the inside. Maybe they can't advise you on stocking rates or feed options — but they are invaluable because they know you,

not just your business.

Networking is about making connections, yes. But more importantly, it's connecting with people who have had shared experiences with you. It's where you exchange ideas and hear someone else's perspective.

I think if you take a step back, you'll see you've already built your

own network — they just aren't wearing any name tags.

Content in this article is general and does not constitute advice — please get in touch if you'd like to discuss your specific circumstances.

*Erin Neale,
Associate at Brown
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From dairy sheds to LEGO towers: Ashburton farmer reaches new heights



LEGO supercars and a LEGO superstar: Paul Winter with his car collection, literally built from the ground up. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Amy Riach
REPORTER

When Ashburton dairy farmer Paul Winter finishes a day managing the farm, he heads home to build something completely different.

This year, that “something” was a towering six-metre LEGO creation, the tallest build he has ever exhibited and one of the standout displays at the 2026 Christchurch Brick Show.

Winter, a dairy 2IC, usually spends his days on a 1000-cow farm in Mid Canterbury.

Now, he has also become a familiar face at LEGO exhibitions across the South Island.

But Winter’s journey into the world of LEGO didn’t begin until he was well into his 50s.

“I never got introduced to LEGO until seven years ago. I didn’t know it even existed,” Winter said.

“It wasn’t something I did as a kid. I’ve been farming basically all my life, my whole life has always revolved around the farm. I truly never had any outside hobbies.”

That changed after Winter met his wife, Diane, whose hobby of building LEGO sets for her grandchildren introduced him to an entirely new world.

One visit to the Rolleston Christmas Grotto later, and at Diane’s insistence, Winter joined weekly building nights with a

group of Christchurch enthusiasts, including future LEGO Masters contestants Rachel and Jason de Vries.

“There’d be a whole room full of bricks to pick from,” Winter explained, “and we’d have different challenges each week. You don’t build off instructions, you just freehand.”

The experience sparked a passion that has steadily grown.

Today, Winter creates his own original builds and exhibits them at shows around the South Island.

The 2026 Christchurch Brick Show was his sixth appearance at the annual event and, he said, every year “it only gets better”.

His centrepiece this year was the latest version of a tower he has spent four years refining.

Built in sections for transport, the model has evolved each year, growing taller and more elaborate.

This year’s version featured revolving triplanes and flashing lights, a dragon that emerged like a cuckoo clock, and a conveyor system that carried visitors’ voting tokens through the tower before dropping them into the ballot box below.

Those votes earned Winter the 2026 People’s Choice trophy, which now has pride of place in the kitchen at home.

But for Winter, “the joy is more about the entertainment of the kids and the crowd”.

“The height was what really inspired that wow factor on their faces.”

During setup, he managed to take the tower even higher before being told to bring it back down.

“This year, I got 10.3 metres before the health and safety guys at

the Wolfbrook Arena said, bring it down!” Winter laughed.

Built at home in 1.2-metre sections for transport, the fourth-generation tower was ultimately displayed at an impressive six metres high.

It was an eye-catching centrepiece among the hundreds of LEGO creations on display at the Christchurch Brick Show.

Building provides a welcome balance to the daily demands of farming.

“It really gives me an outlet,” Winter said.

“Instead of getting up, going to work, coming back and going to sleep, the same old, on repeat all the time, this is basically problem-solving without the pressure. It’s good mental health therapy.”

And those problem-solving skills transfer naturally from the farm to the building table.

“I’m definitely not a textbook person. I’m a visual learner, especially on-farm, and LEGO fits that perfectly.”

Like many of his creations, the tower will eventually disappear.

Winter plans to dismantle it and reuse every brick in an entirely new project.

“It’s gone from actually reasonably small, to what it is now. It’s a growing, evolving build,” he said.

“Now I’m actually pulling it totally to bits and I’m going to build something totally different out of the same parts.”

Winter’s collection includes everything from helicopters and supercars to intricate mechanical displays known as Great Ball Contraptions.

Many of his builds travel with him to exhibitions in places



Paul Winter, a dairy 2IC, says “my whole life has always revolved around the farm”. That changed after he met his wife Diane (left), whose hobby of building LEGO sets for her grandchildren introduced Winter to a new passion.



Paul Winter with his towering six-metre LEGO creation, which earned him the People’s Choice award at the 2026 Christchurch Brick Show.

including Greymouth, Nelson and Christchurch.

“I’m not by any means a LEGO master myself,” Winter said.

“But I do have ideas, and we collaborate as a group. We all pitch in different ideas, and that’s what I love about it too.”

As retirement slowly comes into view, he has no plans to put the bricks away.

“It’s one of those real passions I’ve adopted now,” Winter said.

“I do intend to keep on doing something with my LEGO, because you’ve got to have something to do when you retire as well.”

For now, though, the dairy farm still comes first.

“I’ll work another 10 years after retirement age anyhow,” he laughed.



Lifestyle

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A HARVEST OF MEMORIES

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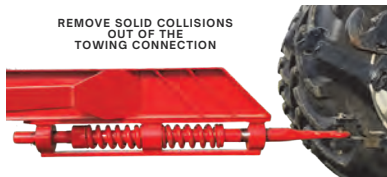


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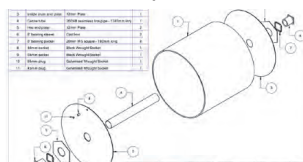


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The Caboose Farm Store was created from a renovated former rabbits' hut at Beaulay Farm. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



The Caboose Farm Store stocks New Zealand-made merino clothing, wool products and lanolin skincare.

Farm tours open gate to new opportunities



Visitors watch a shearing demonstration in the Beaulay Farm woolshed, where they also learn about New Zealand wool and its uses.



Geraldine Farm Tours founder Fiona McQuade has developed multiple complementary income streams at Beaulay Farm.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

For Fiona McQuade, Geraldine Farm Tours began with a simple observation.

Tourists were driving past the top of the road, Beaulay Farm had a shearing shed and established farm infrastructure sitting underused, and there was a chance to create something new without losing the heart of the place.

"I just thought, why would we not do that?" McQuade says.

Today, Geraldine Farm Tours welcomes around 95 groups a year to Beaulay Farm, a 27-acre property on the outskirts of Woodbury Village, six kilometres from Geraldine.

The business brings together a working sheep farm experience, an on-site farm store and a one-bedroom Airbnb cottage, with McQuade now looking at how the three can work more closely together.

But at its heart, she says, Beaulay Farm is still very much a working farm.

"What keeps me awake at night is not the farm tours or the cottage. It is the stock out there relying on me for their wellbeing."

McQuade bought Beaulay Farm in 2012 with her then husband. The property had once been part of a larger farm before previous owners established the homestead, gardens and farm infrastructure, including the shearing shed, cattle yards and sheep yards.

The homestead burnt down in 2003 and was rebuilt on the same footprint. During the rebuild, a small one-bedroom cottage was added for the owners to live in. That cottage is now part of McQuade's

accommodation offering.

The property's extensive English-style gardens are another defining part of Beaulay Farm.

"They are large, but they are also my happy place," McQuade says.

"I call them my therapy. It is where I go to sort things out in my mind and make things right with the world."

McQuade grew up with farming in her blood. She was born in Geraldine and her parents farmed at Rangitata Island before moving to the King Country, where they farmed between Te Kūiti and the Waitomo Caves.

Later, the family moved to Tauranga, where her parents bought an orchard and her father invested in a dairy farm.

After school, McQuade studied classical studies at Otago University before moving into corporate planning, strategic planning and contract negotiation. In London, she worked for BP International, negotiating large outsourcing deals for its digital business division.

"It was one of those jobs I could never have articulated at university," she says.

"But when I fell into it, I loved it." A return to Geraldine came after she and her then husband came home to New Zealand for Christmas and started thinking about where they wanted to raise their family.

They had planned to travel around New Zealand before deciding where to settle, but Geraldine won them over.

"It felt like a really amazing place to bring up children, with good schooling options close by and Christchurch International Airport within reach."

The farm tours came later, in 2017.

At the time, friends down the road had a deer farm, and McQuade could see a gap in the local visitor market.

"There were a lot of tourists driving past the top of the road and

we weren't accessing that market."

The original concept was a combined sheep and deer farm experience. McQuade and her friend even attended a Chinese tourism conference in Dunedin, thinking that might be where the market would come from.

In reality, most guests have come from Europe and North America.

"The Chinese market never really eventuated in that way," she says.

"The majority of our guests have always been Europeans or Americans."

For McQuade, diversification was not just about trying something new. It was about making the property financially sustainable.

"One of the big drivers was that the place needed to wash its own face."

"Lifestyle blocks generally don't. We were trading sheep and had grown a seed crop for South Pacific Seeds, which wasn't too bad, but it still wasn't enough."

Farm tours offered a way to use what was already there.

"We didn't need to spend a huge amount of money. We already had the infrastructure."

The Airbnb cottage began around the same time. It had originally been rented out long term, but McQuade could see more potential in short-term accommodation.

Then Covid arrived.

Just before the pandemic, Geraldine Farm Tours was starting to gain real momentum. A large North American business had booked around 70 groups a year, bringing more than 1000 people through the farm.

Then international tourism stopped almost overnight.

"There was really nothing for nearly two years."

When borders reopened, McQuade was not sure whether she would continue with the tours. But larger groups began making contact again, keen to return once they could.

By then, life had changed personally too. Rather than stepping back, McQuade saw an opportunity to reshape Geraldine Farm Tours and build on its potential.

The farm itself has also changed to support the visitor experience.

McQuade now tends to trade stock rather than run a more traditional breeding operation. This winter was the first on Beaully Farm where there was no need for break feeding, very little feeding out and no lambing beat.

She buys healthy lambs from a neighbouring farmer for bottle feeding in spring. Those lambs are then carried through and become quiet, hand-fed sheep for future visitors.

"We shear two sheep at a time for the visitors, so the farm has to work around the visitor experience as well as the livestock."

A typical tour begins with a welcome, often including a mihi by McQuade, particularly as Beaully Farm is the first stop in New Zealand for many visitors.

After introductions and a health and safety briefing, guests feed spring lambs, weaned lambs or sheep, depending on the season.

They learn about the different types of dogs used in New Zealand farming before watching a heading dog demonstration. In the yards, they also see a huntaway at work.

The tour then moves into the shearing shed, where visitors see both machine and blade shearing. McQuade talks about wool, the different types produced in New Zealand, and what they are used for.

Depending on the group, guests either have morning or afternoon tea on the farm, or lunch at a local cafe featuring New Zealand lamb, salmon and pavlova.

For McQuade, the value of the tours is not just in giving visitors something memorable to do. It is also about helping them better understand New Zealand farming.

One early experience has stayed with her.

A German visitor, who was vegetarian, asked very direct questions about what happened when animals went to the works. She wanted to know how they were loaded, where they went, and what the process looked like.

McQuade remembers wondering how the conversation might end.

"At the end, she said she had loved the tour and that if she had known this was how meat was raised, she would eat it."

McQuade says it was a powerful reminder of the role farm tourism can play.

"That was a massive compliment."

"It showed me how important it is for people to see and understand the way New Zealand farmers care for their animals. It is something I believe all New Zealand farmers should be proud of."

While McQuade did not have a tourism or hospitality background before starting the business, she says being a people person has helped.

"I enjoy engaging with guests, and they always have great questions."

"As Kiwis, we travel so much ourselves that when we are on the other side of it, welcoming international visitors here, we understand what that means."

The experience has also helped her see the farm through fresh eyes.

"It is wonderful being able to welcome people into something that we might think of as quite ordinary, but to them feels

extraordinary."

More recently, McQuade has added The Caboose Farm Store, a small retail space on the property.

The idea came from an annual team discussion where McQuade brings everyone together over dinner and drinks to talk about what went well, what could be improved, and what opportunities might be ahead.

Visitors were often asking whether they could buy wool, a cap, or merino products.

A small building on the property, originally an old rabbit hut, had been beautifully renovated by a local woman before McQuade bought it and relocated it to Beaully Farm. It had previously been her workshop when she ran her own clothing label, Ministry Clothing.

This season, it was converted into The Caboose Farm Store.

"We kept it small to begin with, stocking some merino, Untouched World, Norsewear, Swannndri and NZ made lanolin products."

"It went really well and has become another income stream within the farm tour business."

McQuade has thought about garden tours, but for now she wants to keep some parts of Beaully Farm private.

"This is still my home."

What interests her more is collaboration with other local businesses and finding ways Geraldine Farm Tours can support the wider South Canterbury tourism scene.

Local businesses have already approached her about possible collaborations, including food and drink experiences, Highland cattle and alpacas.

"That could be the next step, looking at what opportunities there are off-farm and how we can work together to support the wider community."

Social media has also become part of the business, even if it has not always come naturally.

"I don't love doing it, but it has hands down created more visibility for the business."

"It has helped with traction, interest and visibility, both locally and globally. It is instant, and I have learned to get into more of a rhythm with it."

Her children, aged 17 to 24, help where they can, even if they find some of it "a bit cringe."

"I just have to embrace it, because it is part of keeping the farm running and growing the business."

Looking ahead, McQuade would like to create more connection between the farm tours, the store and the cottage.

At the moment, the Airbnb cottage is busy from November through to March or April, but relatively few guests book a farm tour.

McQuade would like to change that.

"I would like to position Beaully Farm Cottage as an accommodation option for people who want to come on a farm tour."

"I think there is more opportunity to create a stronger connection between the accommodation and the farm experience."

Running the business has involved plenty of learning, particularly on the farming side.

McQuade may have grown up on farms, but managing livestock herself has been a different challenge.

"I was brought up on farms, but there was still so much I had to learn."

"I have had to learn how to manage livestock, how to trade them, and how to work the farm so



Beaully Farm Cottage offers one-bedroom accommodation among the established gardens at Beaully Farm.



Visitors meet the sheep at Beaully Farm during a Geraldine Farm Tours experience.



Guests have the chance to get close to the animals and learn how livestock are cared for on a New Zealand farm.



A visitor feeds one of Beaully Farm's quiet, hand-fed sheep during a farm tour.



Working dogs are an important part of the Geraldine Farm Tours experience, with visitors learning about the different types of dogs used on New Zealand farms.

everything fits together."

She laughs that she still does not know how to drive a tractor, but now calls herself a "land girl".

"When people ask me what I do, I sometimes say I jump out of utes and tackle fly-blown sheep to the ground so I can treat them."

"That is the part that has been the real challenge and the real learning."

Behind the business is a

wider team McQuade is quick to acknowledge.

Her neighbour manages retail and a lot of the administration. She has two co-hosts, two shearers, someone to help maintain the property and is about to bring another person on. The Woodbury Store Cafe team provides lunches and catering.

"I couldn't have done any of this without an amazing team behind

me.

"It is not just about me, and it is not even just about Geraldine Farm Tours. It is about the broader outcomes and benefits for Geraldine and South Canterbury."

That, she says, is what excites her most.

"I work with other local businesses, and I want the business to help create opportunities beyond the farm gate."

The hardest-working cats at Wilson Bulk Transport



Amy Riach
REPORTER

Before the first truck heads out of the yard each morning, two of Wilson Bulk Transport's longest-serving employees are already on duty.

Trevor is waiting patiently for his breakfast, while Wilson keeps a watchful eye from a safe distance before eventually wandering over for his share.

They don't drive trucks or work in the office, but after more than eight years on the job, the pair have become an important part of daily life at the Tinwald-based transport company.

"They're employed cats," Office Manager Deborah Smith said with a laugh.

"Everyone adores them, but we really don't consider them pets. They're here for pest control, and they're very good at it."

That role has proved invaluable, both in managing the rodent population and keeping away other strays.

With grain, freight and warehouses on site proving an attraction for local wildlife, including rats and mice, stray cats have been visiting the property for many years.

When Smith first joined Wilson Bulk Transport in 2017, the company had already been home to other resident cats, including a pair named Oscar and Sophie.

In 2018, their successors arrived.

"There were a whole group of them, kittens as well, that we had lurking around here," she said.

"Because of what we have here, and because of the birds and the mice and the rats, we do tend to have strays. But these two were special."

Working with the local SPCA on a trapping programme, three fluffy grey kittens, affectionately dubbed the '50 Shades of Grey Trio' by SPCA staff, were sent to a foster home in Christchurch and eventually adopted together.

That left two tomcats, and Smith decided they needed names that reflected where they now belonged.

Their names honour company founder Trevor Wilson, who helped build one of Canterbury's best-known transport businesses.

"It was me who came up with the names. I thought if we were going to keep them, it made sense. In memory of Trevor."

Trevor first established a combine harvesting contracting business in 1969 with his brother Maurice, and as demand grew, Trevor branched out on his own.

He founded Wilson Bulk Transport Ltd and expanded into container transport.

The business was purchased by the Wareing family in 2018, and today it employs nearly 50 staff and operates more than 36 trucks. Most importantly, it continues to support two very popular



Trevor the cat, 'Head of Pest Control' at Wilson Bulk Transport, is busy slacking off and getting cuddles! Office Manager Deborah Smith is his direct supervisor and favourite friend.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Time for a site inspection! Trevor likes to observe from high ground, while Wilson prefers to be right in the middle of things.

employees.

Trevor, now believed to be at least 10 years old, has developed a reputation as the office cuddle bug.

"Trevor will literally lie back in your arms like a baby," Smith said.

"He'd spend all day wrapped around your neck if he could. He just wants to be around people."

Although he brings down his fair share of mice, his favourite place isn't always out hunting.

"It's on top of me, on top of the keyboard and everything else I need," Smith laughed.

Wilson is a different character altogether.

More cautious and independent, it took far longer for him to trust people.

"It probably took about 18 months before they were really comfortable with us, and Wilson was always about two years behind Trevor," Smith said.

"I've still got the scars from when we first trapped them!"

"I'm not supposed to have favourites, but that's probably why I like Wilson more. It makes you realise just how much he trusts us now, and how far he's actually come."

Like many valued staff members, the pair have developed a few workplace expectations.

Every morning now starts with breakfast cheese, after they once discovered Smith's own cheese and crackers and refused to go back.

"They stole it from my own

lunch," she laughed.

"Now I just cut an extra slice of cheese, and they always get half each."

Over the years, even the most sceptical truck drivers have become fans.

"At first, some of them definitely thought the cats were just a pain."

"Now if they don't see them for a couple of days, they're asking, 'Where's the cat? Is the cat okay?'"

One staff member donated a towering cat tree, another keeps treats tucked away in the office, and drivers regularly check on them over the weekends.

The cats have also become a talking point for customers and visiting drivers.

"They just cheer people up," Smith said.

"And because they're toms, they do a great job keeping any other strays well away."

But in spite of the cuddles and breakfast cheese, they still earn their keep.

"They get looked after here, they get vet care if they need it, they get wormed and flea treated, and they keep all the other strays away."

"They're good for pest control, they're good for morale, and they're really good for customers."

For two former strays who simply wandered into the yard looking for food, Trevor and Wilson have come a long way.

"Our very own rags-to-riches story!"



Trevor and Wilson on their lunch break after a long day as gainfully employed cats.



'Rags to riches': these stray cats have come a long way, and they intend to make the most of their employee benefits.



Trevor's favourite place – directly on top of whatever Deborah Smith needs to be doing at that moment.



Employee training! Even for cats, it's important to go through the proper channels for new staff.

Gold star firefighter



Amy Riach
REPORTER

When the siren sounded in Willowby more than 26 years ago, Debs Stilgoe-Brooker stood at a crossroads watching the fire truck wait at its station, with no crew available to respond.

"I stood there at the roadside with a friend, while the siren was blaring," she recalled. "Our husbands were both in the brigade at the time, and we thought, 'We could have had the truck out by now!' A few months later, we joined."

That decision led to an extraordinary milestone.

On August 2, Stilgoe-Brooker received the New Zealand Fire Service Gold Star, recognising more than 25 years of operational service.

She became the first woman from a rural brigade in Mid-South Canterbury to receive the honour.

"It really is making history," she said. "Which is really exciting."

Just four Gold Stars have been awarded to women in Canterbury to date, all from urban brigades.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Stilgoe-Brooker had few family members in New Zealand when she arrived. Instead, she found one in the Willowby Volunteer Fire Brigade.

"The brigade became my family for many years," she said.

Over the years, her willingness to put her hand up saw Stilgoe-Brooker complete qualifications, take on leadership roles and, in 2021, become the first woman to lead a volunteer fire brigade as Fire Chief in Canterbury.

"I always put my hand up for opportunities," she said.

"Paperwork didn't frighten me, so I was happy to do exams and qualifications. That just helped me get through, until all of a sudden it's like I'm at the top."

She stepped down as chief in 2023, but remains an operational firefighter and active member of the brigade.

Her firefighting career has unfolded alongside raising a family, often in extraordinary circumstances.

Stilgoe-Brooker fought a major fire at the Ashburton landfill just days before giving birth to her eldest daughter, Penny, when firefighters were in short supply.

"I fought fire three days before I gave birth," she laughed.

"At that time there were no rules to say that I couldn't, and there was a need, so I did!"

Later, as a young mother, she often took her daughters along to brigade activities.

"I always used to take my kids with me to the fireground. We all packed up into a little green car, it was our routine."

Today, that dedication has become a family legacy.

Older daughter Penny now serves with the Willowby and Ashburton volunteer brigades, while younger daughter, Amy Stilgoe, is a firefighter with Pines Beach Volunteer Fire Brigade near

Christchurch.

Amy received her five-year service honour at the same ceremony as her mother received her Gold Star, while Penny flew home from the United Kingdom for less than 48 hours to be there.

"She flew all the way home just to see me receive the award," Stilgoe-Brooker said.

The role of volunteer firefighters has changed significantly during her 26 years of service.

"When I joined in 1999, we just wanted to turn up and fight fires," she said.

Today, volunteers also respond to medical emergencies, motor vehicle crashes and rescue incidents.

Despite the additional demands, the thrill of responding has never disappeared.

"I've got to admit, it's a buzz.

"When you see smoke and you see flames, there's a rush. It's fear and it's respect."

That respect comes from painful experience.

Stilgoe-Brooker is the only current Willowby Brigade member who was there in 2009 when fellow firefighter Barry Keen was killed while operating a fire pump during a callout.

"People still say, 'but you're only a volunteer' but not everybody comes home," she said quietly.

"It's one of my mantras, that people go and fight fires and they come home safely. Unfortunately, I know not everybody does."

The experience shaped her leadership and her determination to ensure firefighters returned safely to their families.

One of the most rewarding parts of her career has been seeing attitudes towards women in firefighting change.

"I wasn't great at doing the cake sales, and I can't knit," she laughed.

"Everybody's got their strengths. I can fight fire. I'm very good at that."

She remembers visiting schools and kindergartens with the fire truck, where children would tell her she could not be a fireman because she was a girl.

Her response was simple.

"Yes, I can. I can drive the fire truck. I can put the wet stuff on the hot stuff."

She hopes her story will encourage other women to consider volunteering.

"If any woman reads this and goes, 'Oh, I can actually go and be



Debs Stilgoe-Brooker, the first rural female firefighter in Mid-South Canterbury to receive a Gold Star award, said the real joy of the job is simply "putting wet stuff on hot stuff." PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Debs Stilgoe-Brooker (middle) with her two daughters, Penny (left) and Amy (right). Backed by the Willowby Fire Brigade.

a volunteer,' then that's fantastic.

"But even if you're 60 years old and don't want to fight fires, there are still ways to serve your community through your local brigade. We're about risk reduction

and helping people, not just putting out fires."

Retirement still isn't on Stilgoe-Brooker's mind.

"I'm not ready to give up yet," she said. "I still feel I've got more

to offer."

It all began with a siren, a crossroads and one simple thought.

"We could have had the truck out by now."



Penny (left) and Amy Stilgoe, with their mum Debs (middle). Both girls presented Debs with a gold rose on the night of the ceremony, a gift she plans to keep forever.

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From left, BetterMan founders Ryan Astle, Todd Astle and Ged Robinson, who are taking a more informal approach to men's wellbeing through sport, humour, connection and conversation. PHOTO SUPPLIED



From Black Cap to Betterman



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Former Black Cap Todd Astle is using lessons from professional sport to help Kiwi men talk about wellbeing, but without making it feel like a mental health seminar.

Astle is one of the founders of BetterMan, a Christchurch-based wellbeing charity set up with his brother Ryan Astle and former professional rugby player Ged Robinson.

The organisation runs events, school and workplace workshops, and a weekly men's exercise and connection group, with a strong focus on positive psychology and prevention.

Astle says the idea grew naturally from the founders' sporting backgrounds and their interest in team culture and looking after the people around them.

"We thought, why don't we run fun events that we would actually want to attend?" he says.

"Then there's that ripple effect where our mates bring their mates, and it grows from there."

BetterMan's approach is deliberately informal.

Rather than leading with mental

health, its events use humour, games, sport and competition to bring people together, with wellbeing messages introduced along the way.

"We understand that a lot of Kiwi men and boys are struggling, so it's about asking how we can have a fun approach to mental health," Astle says.

"You can layer in the positive psychology, wellbeing and mental health aspects, rather than almost scaring people off by saying, 'We're running a mental health workshop or wellbeing event.'"

Astle says sport has given the BetterMan team a useful way to connect with men who might otherwise be reluctant to engage with the subject.

"I think it's using our profiles in sport and allowing people to feel a bit more disarmed."

"We can have fun and share our stories, and that then gives permission for others to do the same."

BetterMan describes its role as helping build the "fence at the top of the cliff", rather than waiting until people are in crisis.

Its programmes focus on practical ways people can maintain and improve their wellbeing, including relationships, resilience, emotional regulation and positive emotions.

BetterMan recently held its first Rural Edition of Quiz and Some Other Shizz in conjunction with North Canterbury and Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trusts.

The event took the BetterMan format to a rural audience, using a quiz, games, humour and guest speakers to bring people together while introducing some of the wider wellbeing messages behind the organisation.

Astle says farmers may already be carrying significant pressure when they walk into a mental health event, and confronting stories do not necessarily work for everyone.

"Our approach is about fun, engagement and interaction," he says.

"Then you're able to take that positive approach and look at, how can I maintain or improve my wellbeing? What can I put in place? What strategies and tools are going to support me to be at my best?"

Astle says that approach is particularly relevant in industries such as farming, where there can be a culture of simply getting on with the job.

"We hear it time and time again in farming and construction," he says.

"There can be that stoic, 'she'll be right, just get on with it' mentality."

"We want to challenge that and create environments where guys can come together in their own spaces, where stories can be told and people can have fun."

Connection is a recurring theme in Astle's own story.

He spent close to two decades playing professional cricket for Canterbury and also represented

New Zealand before gradually stepping away from the game.

Despite planning for retirement, he says leaving a team environment that had shaped most of his adult life was still difficult.

"I guess the hardest thing for me was leaving the WhatsApp group with the Canterbury cricket team, which had basically been my family for close to 20 years."

His friendships, routine and much of his identity had been tied to cricket.

"Nothing really prepares you," he says.

"It's probably like parenting. You can do all of the antenatal courses and things, but then when it happens, you are having to navigate that."

Astle deliberately wound down his cricket career in stages and had already begun working as a mental skills coach before retiring.

He says many of the skills he was teaching other athletes became useful during his own transition.

"A lot of the things that I was teaching, I was kind of needing to practise as well around resilience and self-talk and routines."

He now runs mental skills business Innerspin alongside his work with BetterMan.

Astle says major changes in identity and connection are not unique to professional athletes.

People can experience the same thing when they leave school, change jobs, become parents, move towns, stop playing sport or take on new responsibilities.

In rural communities that might mean finishing rugby, leaving Young Farmers, taking over the family farm or simply having less time to catch up with mates.

"We're all going through transitions at different stages of our lives," he says.

"Our identities can be so wrapped up in those things."

BetterMan uses the acronym BYC to describe its approach: Betterment, Yarns and Competition.

Astle says competition brings the banter and interaction familiar to many men, while the "yarns" provide opportunities for connection.

That philosophy is also behind Six Ten Better Men, held every Friday morning at Halswell Rugby League Club.

The group meets at 6.10am for a short bodyweight workout, games and conversation.

"It is a chance to start the day with that physical wellbeing, but also that social connection, which we know is vital," Astle says.

BetterMan also works in schools and workplaces and has run events featuring speakers including broadcaster Scotty Stevenson, Matt Heath and Between Two Beers hosts Seamus Marten and Steve Holloway.

Astle says the aim across all of its work remains much the same: giving people practical tools to look after themselves, creating opportunities to connect and making conversations around wellbeing easier to start.



Lauren Stokes hopes the Women's Hormone Summit will help rural women better understand their health and feel less alone. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Helping rural women understand the hormonal 'why'

A new Mid Canterbury summit aims to cut through conflicting health advice and help women better understand what is happening in their bodies.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Women struggling with heavy periods, sleepless nights, hot flushes or unexplained fatigue are too often left confused and unsure where to turn, says Mid Canterbury naturopath Lauren Stokes.

It is a pattern Stokes sees regularly through her work at Nourish Natural Healthcare.

Younger women may be living with debilitating periods, while those approaching or experiencing menopause can face hot flushes, mood changes, weight gain, sore joints, insomnia and fatigue.

"A lot of women feel completely

lost," Stokes says.

"They don't know why these things are happening or how they started, and they feel so confused about it all that they're not really sure what to do."

That experience prompted Stokes to organise the Women's Hormone Summit, which will bring together four Mid Canterbury health practitioners at Hotel Ashburton on September 11.

The evening will cover menstrual health, contraception, hormone replacement therapy, perimenopause, menopause and a Chinese medicine perspective on hormonal health.

Stokes says too many women believe their suffering is simply something they have to tolerate.

"That makes me really sad," she says.

"I know that suffering isn't normal and there is actually so much that can be done to help."

She says the challenge now is not a lack of information, but the

volume of conflicting advice.

A quick online search can produce endless recommendations about supplements, diet, exercise, testing and hormone replacement therapy.

Women may be told to take HRT, avoid HRT, eat more protein, lift heavier weights or buy a particular supplement, often without a clear explanation of why any of those choices may or may not be right for them.

"They've gone and spent hundreds of dollars just guessing and hoping," Stokes says.

"The advice coming at them from the internet, or from individual health professionals, can be more confusing than it is helpful."

Rather than telling women what they should do, the summit will focus on helping them understand what is happening within their bodies.

Stokes believes understanding the "why" behind health advice is essential, particularly when a woman's energy and motivation are already low.

Being told to exercise more, reduce stress or change eating habits can simply add another task to an already overwhelming list.

"But if you understand what is

happening physiologically and why something is affecting your body, that understanding can increase the motivation towards change," she says.

The summit will feature presentations from each speaker, followed by an open question and answer session.

Stokes will discuss menstrual problems, particularly heavy and painful periods. GP Dr Laura Pfeifer will cover contraception and hormone replacement therapy, including potential benefits and risks.

Acupuncturist Sally Flewelling will present a Chinese medicine view of the hormonal system, while nutritionist Vera Prazak will discuss perimenopause and menopause issues such as weight gain and fatigue.

"We all approach things slightly differently, but we have the collective interest of educating and helping," Stokes says.

For rural women, accessing the right support can be particularly challenging.

Many of Stokes' clients live rurally, where distance, limited services and isolation can intensify an already difficult stage of life.

Menopause often coincides with other significant changes. Children

may be leaving home, parents may be ageing or dying, and women can find themselves questioning their identity and purpose.

At the same time, they may be juggling farm work, household responsibilities, family commitments and another job.

"They're going through a really wobbly time physically, mentally and emotionally because of menopause, and then they might be out on a farm where they're really quite isolated," Stokes says.

"They can feel lost within their bodies and what is happening with their symptoms, but also potentially a little bit lost in life."

Stokes hopes the summit will create a supportive environment in which women feel understood and realise they are not alone.

She wants attendees to leave with a clearer understanding of their bodies and simple, realistic steps that may help them begin to feel better.

"My vision is for all four of us to share our knowledge in a way that explains the why behind what is happening," she says.

The Women's Hormone Summit will be held at Hotel Ashburton on Friday, September 11, from 6pm. Tickets are available at nourishnaturalhealthcare.co.nz.



From left, Emily Horne, Natasha Moore, photographer Liv Gorman, Jess Letham and Lauren Pearce, part of the team behind A Lauriston Harvest. PHOTO SUPPLIED



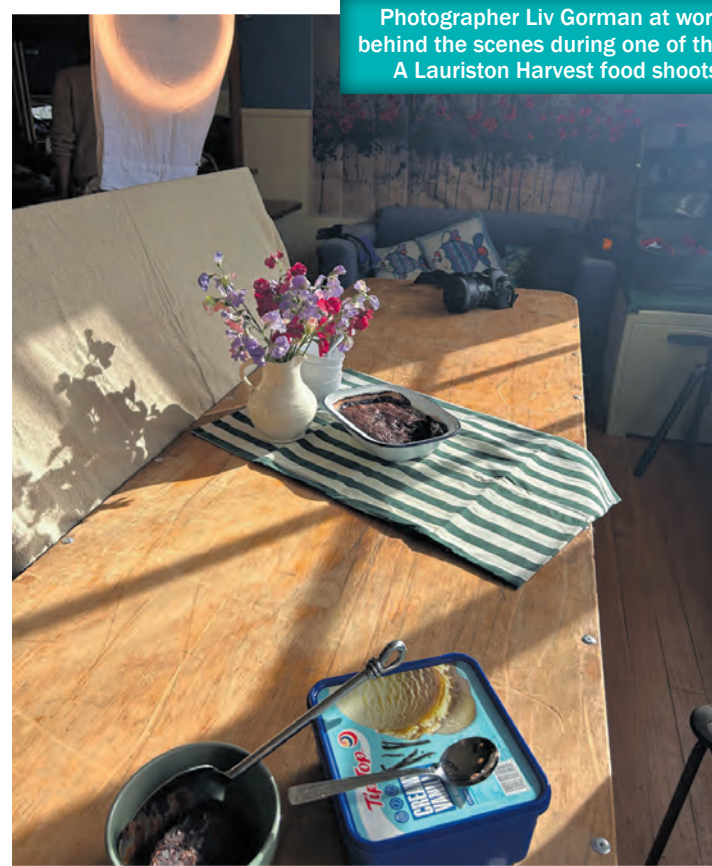
More than a fundraiser, A Lauriston Harvest has been designed as a keepsake celebrating food, memories and community.



Photographer Liv Gorman helps style one of the dishes before photographing it for A Lauriston Harvest.



Photographer Liv Gorman captures one of the rural scenes featured in A Lauriston Harvest.



Photographer Liv Gorman at work behind the scenes during one of the A Lauriston Harvest food shoots.

A recipe for community

A new cookbook from Lauriston School is serving up much more than tried-and-true recipes, capturing the people, memories and community spirit of a small Mid Canterbury school along the way.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

There is a particular kind of culinary nostalgia attached to recipes handed down through families.

They are the cakes made for every family birthday, the dish somebody's grandmother was famous for, or the recipe passed down and still pulled out whenever something trusted and tasty is needed.

Those are the recipes finding their way into a new cookbook, "A Lauriston Harvest", being created as a fundraiser for Lauriston School.

Lauren Pearce and Jess Letham are part of the team behind the project, which has drawn recipes,

memories and plenty of helping hands from across the wider school community.

"There's a lot of love in it," Letham said.

Some recipes include notes explaining where they came from, including references to people who are no longer alive, while others have been passed between members of Lauriston School Support and brought out for birthdays, community catering and special occasions.

The idea was first floated at a meeting by local parent Emily Horne as Lauriston School Support searched for a new fundraising project.

"You're always trying to find an idea that's a bit different," Pearce said.

A core group of four took on the project, but they quickly decided they wanted to create something people would keep.

"We didn't want it to be your standard school cookbook fundraiser," Letham said.

"We wanted it to be a keepsake

more than anything. An heirloom cookbook."

Professional photography and graphic design expertise within the school community helped bring that vision to life.

Natasha Moore created the design and layout, while photographer Liv Gorman, photographed the dishes, with contributors asked to supply their favourite recipe and make it for the camera.

The photo shoots quickly became a community effort.

"Everyone's kitchens got raided," Pearce said.

"We had stand mixers, cake pans, mother-in-law's linen, everything came out to play."

There was plenty of taste testing too.

"There were things I probably would have looked at and thought, 'Oh, that's unusual,' but then I tasted them and thought, 'I can't wait to make that now,'" Letham said.

Recipes have come from beyond the current school roll, including

a former principal who still lives nearby, people with longstanding links to the school and dishes traditionally used by Lauriston School Support when catering for events such as Lions dinners.

And while the stories behind the food matter, so does one important rule.

The recipes have to work.

"The committee really pushed for people's favourites," Pearce said.

"The ones that you don't need to look at the recipe book for and that you know everyone will eat."

That means the book ranges from special dinners and desserts through to bread, crackers and quick family staples.

There are also plenty designed for rural households.

"There's something you can throw together on a Wednesday when you've come in off the farm at five o'clock and you're thinking, 'Holy moly, what am I cooking tonight?'" Pearce said.

The community has clearly responded.

More than 200 copies have already been pre-ordered, well beyond expectations.

The initial print price was based on runs of around 100 to 150 copies.

"We will definitely be increasing that," Letham said.

"It's been a really, really positive

response."

Money raised through the \$45 cookbook will go to Lauriston School Support.

Each year the group works from a wish list provided by the school's Board of Trustees, fundraising towards things such as running the school pool, Education Outside the Classroom and other opportunities that enhance pupils' school experience.

"They're the nice-to-haves," Pearce said.

"The things the government doesn't fund, but that we think are really important for our kids."

Yet long after the money has been raised and spent, the cookbook itself is likely to remain on shelves throughout Lauriston and beyond.

Pages will become dog-eared and stained and favourite recipes will fall open automatically. Names beside recipes will prompt memories and, eventually, another generation may inherit copies of their own.

Not simply a fundraiser, but a little piece of Lauriston history, preserved through the food its community loves.

A Lauriston Harvest cookbook costs \$45. To pre-order, email lsscookbook@gmail.com with your name, phone number and the number of copies required.

THINK BERBERINE, THINK BLOOD SUGAR

Your body has finely tuned systems for turning food into usable energy. Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose, or blood sugar, which enters the bloodstream. The pancreas then releases insulin, the hormone that helps move glucose from the blood into cells, where it can be used for fuel.

Too much blood sugar and cell insulin resistance can become a serious problem. Surplus glucose can attach to proteins and fats in the bloodstream forming harmful compounds causing inflammation and tissue damage. This damage is a real concern in prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes, particularly when it affects blood vessels and nerves.

While we can store some blood sugar as glycogen, excess glucose (blood sugar) is converted into triglycerides, a type of fat, and released into the bloodstream to be stored as body fat. This is why weight gain and raised triglyceride levels can be signs of poor blood sugar control.

The best way to support healthy blood sugar control is to follow a diet low in sugar and carbohydrates, while focusing on low-starch plant foods, healthy fats, and protein. For more information, contact me for an email

copy of my Healthy Eating Guide.

Two supplements can be helpful while making these diet changes: a high-quality, water-soluble berberine extract and the mineral chromium polynicotinate. Berberine and chromium both play key roles in blood sugar metabolism.

Berberine supports AMPK (AMP-activate protein kinase) often described as the body's "energy switch". AMPK helps maintain healthy blood sugar balance by reducing further glucose production and encouraging glucose to move out of the bloodstream and into cells for energy. Chromium supports insulin receptor function, helping cells take up glucose more effectively. Choose a water-soluble berberine extract where possible, as it may improve absorption and reduce the digestive discomfort sometimes associated with standard berberine extracts.

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Amy's Cheese Ball

Recipe from A Lauriston Harvest, the new Lauriston School community cookbook. Copies are \$45 and can be pre-ordered by emailing lsscookbook@gmail.com with your name, phone number and number of copies required.

Recipe submitted by: Claire Hollings

Ingredients

- 2-3 large gherkins, finely chopped
- 1 cup tasty cheese, grated
- 2 Tbsp Cerebros sweet corn relish
- 200-250g full-fat cream cheese

To coat (your choice of):

- Finely chopped nuts (peanuts, almonds or cashews)
- Toasted seeds (sunflower, sesame or pumpkin)
- Fresh herbs, chopped (parsley, coriander etc)

Method

1. In a medium bowl, combine the chopped gherkins, grated tasty

cheese, corn relish and cream cheese. Mix well until evenly blended.

2. Shape the mixture into a large ball, or divide into two smaller balls if preferred. Chill until firm.
3. Once firm, roll in your choice of coating — chopped nuts, toasted seeds, or fresh herbs — until evenly covered.

4. Serve with crackers or fresh bread
- This recipe comes from my amazing sister, the family cook, and can easily be halved. It yields a generous amount and is always a hit with guests — don't be shocked if you find yourself being asked for the recipe.

Berberine Balance

A smarter way to take berberine

Berberine has become one of the most talked-about natural ingredients for supporting healthy blood sugar balance, weight management and overall metabolic health. Unfortunately, traditional berberine extracts are poorly absorbed, often require high daily doses, and can cause digestive discomfort in some people.

Health House's new Berberine Balance features

Metaberine®

Each capsule provides 200mg of Metaberine®, a new generation of berberine developed using patented BioSOLVE® technology (optimising water solubility). This advanced extract is designed to be absorbed more efficiently than standard berberine extracts, allowing a much lower daily dose.

Chromium

Each capsule combines Metaberine® with chromium polynicotinate. Chromium is an essential trace mineral that also complements the benefits of berberine.

Berberine Balance combines modern ingredient technology with one of the world's most researched botanical ingredients to provide a well-absorbed and well-tolerated option for everyday use.

Supports:

- ✓ Normal blood glucose metabolism
- ✓ Healthy fat metabolism
- ✓ Your body's natural metabolic balance
- ✓ Natural energy and general wellbeing

Can interact with prescription medications for blood sugar management such as metformin, and certain blood thinners.



Always read the label and use as directed. If symptoms persist see your healthcare professional.

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