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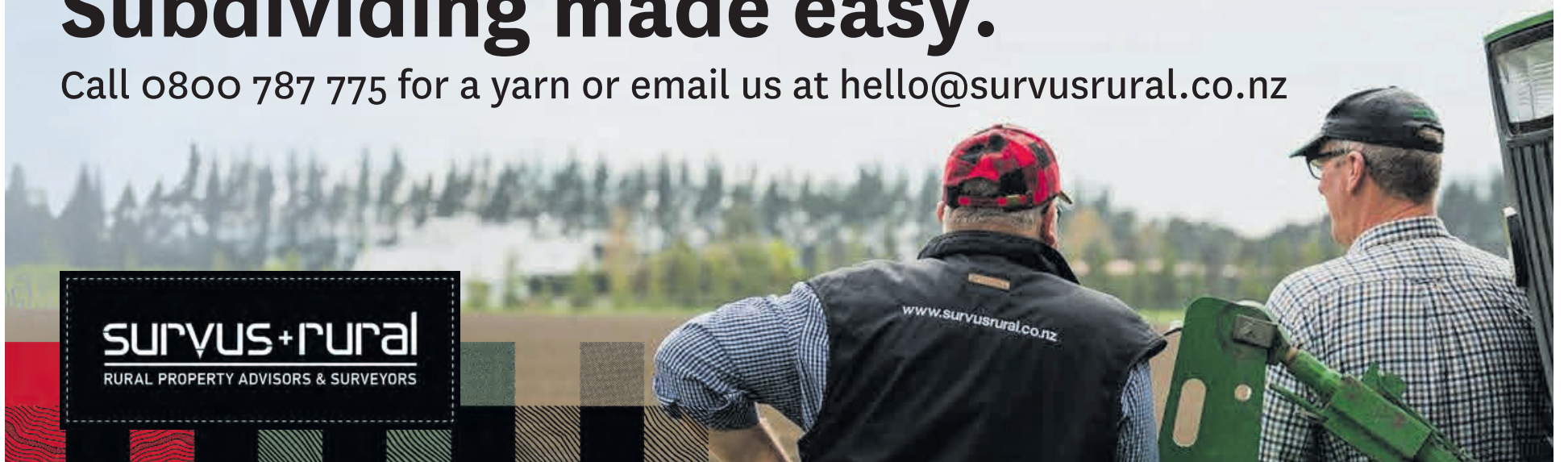
## THE NEXT GEN BEHIND THE WHEEL



**Pages 16**

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Be part of our growing rural community — follow @ruralguardian on Instagram and Facebook for more real-life stories, farm inspiration, lifestyle features and what's coming up in the next issue.

## Showing Up, Anyway

It feels like life is geared these days to be frictionless. Thanks to advances in technology and AI, almost everything we need is at our fingertips — from grocery shopping and workouts to TV shows and music.

We can stream what we want, when we want.

We rarely have to wait for anything. And AI is only speeding that up.

While technology and AI are making their way into farming, the work itself is still hard yakka.

But outside the farm gate, life is becoming

increasingly automated.

And that raises a bigger question: is all this convenience making us less willing to be inconvenienced — and what does that mean for rural communities that rely on people taking the time to show up for organisations, events and each other?

We can't automate community.

Because despite the fact these advances should mean we have more time, it's worth asking what we're actually doing with that time.

And whether we could be using some of it better.



Research shows people in rural areas are still more likely to take on community-focused, volunteer work than those in urban centres. But the reality is that the same small group often carries it. For those organising events and keeping community initiatives running, that weight can be exhausting.

Rather than focusing on what we can't do, it's worth thinking about what we can.

This isn't about overloading people or taking on too much. It's about doing something.

Got a spare five minutes? Pick up the phone and call your neighbour.

Need to grab something? Try local first.

Want to feel more connected to your community? Join a committee — even for a season.

In a UK national survey, 77 percent of volunteers said volunteering improved their mental health and wellbeing, with many saying it helped them feel less isolated.

Simply attending community events showed similar benefits.

Research has also found that regularly attending in-person community events — festivals, markets, shows and even rugby games — is linked to higher positive emotions and a stronger sense of engagement.

Rural communities thrive when people show up.

So here are five ways to do that.

**1. Support local events — especially the volunteer-run ones**

A&P shows, school fundraisers and field days don't run themselves.

What keeps them alive is turning up on the day. When people stop showing up, events disappear.

**2. Show up even when it doesn't quite suit**

Rural life has always relied on people helping out when it's not ideal. Sometimes a half-hour car ride to an event or a meeting feels like the last thing you want to do. But often, once you're there, it's worth it.

**3. Back local businesses — consistently**

Local contractors, suppliers and cafés keep small towns going. Choosing them where you can keeps money local and people in work.

**4. Make time for connection**

A chat at the gate, staying for the cuppa, or saying yes to a shared meal all matter more than we like to admit.

**5. Give the next generation a chance**

Rural communities don't continue by default. They continue because someone younger is given room to learn and step up.

That means trusting young farmers, staff and rural kids with responsibility. Sharing knowledge — how things work, why decisions get made, what you've learned along the way.

Connection is never a waste of time.

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# “Read the label!” And other good practice spray tips

## How to avoid prosecution and keep on good terms with the neighbours

**B**est agricultural practice has a lot of moving parts nowadays and that extends to control of spray drift.

Many regional councils now have strict conditions regarding spray drift onto neighbouring properties, along with required notifications before spraying in some instances.

That is on top of the economics of keeping spray where it works best, minimising waste, and optimising productivity.

Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Ltd Adjuvant Lead and Regional Manager Upper North Island, shares his top tips on good agricultural spray practice, and being a good neighbour.

“First read the label carefully – even if you’re really familiar with a product.

He says it’s particularly important to look at timings for re-entry, withholding and plant back periods. “These can be very specific and can vary, even if you’re using the same product over a variety of crops.

“It’s also important to choose products that are fit for purpose, and that includes adjuvants – the products that make sprays spread, stick or get into plants. If you’re using a water-based chemical, then use a water-based adjuvant. If you’re using an oil-based chemical, use an oil-based adjuvant with it.”

Crop oils, crop oil concentrates, and methylated seed oils, Pieter explains, break down the waxy surface on plants and are vital to achieve efficacy for some herbicides, insecticides and fungicides.

Water-based adjuvants are additives used in spray mixes (typically crop protection products and nutrients) to enhance performance, acting as surfactants, wetting agents, or water conditioners. “They work to give better spread.”



Residue crop damage caused by inadequate spray tank decontamination

Watching the weather is another essential. “It sounds obvious. But if rain was to fall it washes the spray onto the ground where a lot of chemistry is lost – which is a waste. It’s supposed to work on the leaves, not the roots. It’s throwing money away.”

He suggests using a “spotter” to watch for potential spray drift and any sudden changes in wind direction.

Making sure spray gets exactly where it needs to be (effective deposition), extends spray application windows, and maximises ROI from your spray programme. Importantly, it also helps prevent negatively impacting neighbouring crops.

Li-1000® and Unison® are both multipurpose adjuvant-surfactant, penetrant, and drift retardant, all in one. Pieter says the non-ionic, low foam, surfactants enhance

the activity and penetration of herbicides and other crop protection products. “Either one of them, Li-1000 or Unison, is the perfect partner, particularly for spray-out, knockdown herbicides such as glyphosate, enhancing activity and penetration. Glyphosate remains an important part of pastoral farming practice, especially when fast turnaround for a new crop, or re-grassing is needed. And that’s quite often!”

Pieter says foaming in the spray tank is another spray efficacy robber. Though there is an easy and effective solution: FoamMaster®. Pieter says it only takes a tiny amount to save the waste that comes from foaming – 1 mL to 100 L. “FoamMaster sits on the top and pops the bubbles.”

Probably the best known of UPL’s adjuvants is Du-Wett®. Pieter recommends using the super spreader for optimal crop coverage. “It saves time, reduces waste and, critically, there’s going to be a better outcome.” Du-Wett will easily pay for itself, ensuring growers and farmers get the most out of every drop of the spray.

“With Du-Wett you cover a greater area faster, with a much-reduced water volume and still get better protection for the crop. Until relatively recently, the volume of water in spray programmes hasn’t been that big a concern. But now, with modern application techniques, including low water volume applications, rising fuel, labour, and spray costs, and shifts in attitudes towards the use of water itself, that’s changing. And it makes financial sense to get onboard with that.”

“Du-Wett reduces the surface tension of spray droplets. One spray droplet containing Du-Wett can provide up to 20 times the spread of active compared to an insecticide

applied without an adjuvant and at least 6-8 times compared to a conventional, non-ionic adjuvant.

“Hard water” Pieter says is another substantial challenge easily solved by using the right adjuvant. “Water hardness has one of the biggest negative impacts on spray performance.”

He says that leads to unnecessary expense, extra fuel and labour costs, and reduced efficacy – all issues easily addressed with a water conditioner.

X-Change® acts as a “sacrificial” product, changing “hard” water into “soft” by locking up free ions, which would otherwise deactivate products.

“Some chemicals, including glyphosates, are very susceptible to the effect of ‘hard’ water. The positively charged cations in calcium, magnesium, iron etc. bind to the negatively charged glyphosate molecule. This slows up-take, reduces solubility, reducing efficacy.

Last but not least, Pieter says the adjuvant All Clear® is the insurance policy spray contractors, growers and farmers can’t afford not to have.

“Even tiny quantities of the wrong chemical left in the spray tank can have a huge impact.”

Pieter says to avoid cleaning spray tanks with laundry powder or ammonia. “They’re not going to remove every trace of spray – that’s simply not what they’re formulated to do.

“But, above all, always read the label.”

Talk to your local technical representative to learn more about good agricultural practices or contact Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Adjuvant Lead and Regional Manager Upper North Island at 021 392 740.



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# More than a chop: National Lamb Day returns



Chair of Ag Proud and the National Lamb Day committee Jon Pemberton says National Lamb Day is about New Zealand coming together to celebrate primary industry and the country's agricultural history and contribution to the economy. PHOTO SUPPLIED



**Claire Inkson**

RURAL  
EDITOR

**"T**his is no one's day. It's not Ag Proud's day and it's not the committee's day. It's about New Zealand coming together," Pemberton says.

National Lamb Day marks the anniversary of the country's first frozen lamb shipment in 1882, a turning point that helped shape the country's farming sector.

"New Zealand agriculture was built on those exports," Pemberton says.

He says lamb wasn't the only product on board.

"There were other things in that boat as well," he says. "There was dairy — even butter from a factory just a couple of minutes down the road from us here (Edendale, Southland). The deeper you go into it, the more of the story there is."



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## Field Days celebration

This year's build-up will again include a strong presence at Southern Field Days in Waimumu.

On Friday, 13 February, National Lamb Day will be marked on site with national radio broadcasts, barbecues and on-site activity. Jay Reeve and Duncan Heyde from The Rock will be hosting throughout the day, with free lamb tastings for visitors.

"It worked well last year, so we're doing it again," Pemberton says.

The Field Days celebration leads into the official day on Sunday, when people are encouraged to mark the occasion in their own way — whether by firing up the barbecue or the roasting pan.

"Whether it's lamb, beef, venison or pork, the Sunday roast or the barbecue is still a big part of it," Pemberton says.

The Dining Guide will also return online, highlighting restaurants around the country serving lamb dishes for those choosing to eat out.

People are encouraged to spend the day with family or friends, register a barbecue, share photos using #NationalLambDay, or show their support by wearing a National Lamb Day T-shirt.

The T-shirt has become a familiar part of the event, with a different colour released each year. The 2026 shirt is khaki green.

"On farm, each year stock often has a different colour tag," Pemberton says. "We're doing the same thing with the T-shirts."

## Industry backing

Support from principal partners Rabobank and FMG returns in 2026, helping organisers build on the momentum of recent years.



National Lamb Day will be marked again on 15 February, with organisers encouraging New Zealanders to get behind a day that's about more than just what's on the plate. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

"It takes a lot of volunteer time to make this happen," Pemberton says. "Each year we get a bit more organised."

He says backing from long-standing rural organisations makes a real difference.

"Their support helps us celebrate farmers, producers and rural communities in a way that reflects the pride behind New Zealand lamb."

Rabobank New Zealand chief executive Todd Charteris says National Lamb Day remains an important reminder of what sits behind the country's food sector.

"National Lamb Day is an important reminder of the dedication behind New Zealand's world-class food production, and we're pleased to continue our support in 2026," Charteris says.

Rabobank will also take part in the Southern Field Days celebrations, with lamb on offer for visitors at its marquee.

FMG chief marketing officer Pete Frizzell says the campaign aligns closely with FMG's rural focus.

"Backing National Lamb Day aligns strongly with our commitment to rural communities, and we're looking forward to



While lamb gives the day its name, chair of Ag Proud and the National Lamb Day committee Jon Pemberton says the focus is broader, celebrating New Zealand agriculture as a whole.

another great year of celebrating Kiwi farmers," Frizzell says.

For organisers, the aim is to keep National Lamb Day inclusive and low-key.

"It doesn't need to be complicated. It's about getting

together," Pemberton says.

National Lamb Day is held annually on 15 February. More information, including how to register a barbecue or order a T-shirt, is available at [nationallambday.co.nz](http://nationallambday.co.nz).

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**Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each month we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmers Club member. Today we chat to Coastal Taranaki member Carlos Reid.**

**1** What is the name of your club, and how long have you been a member?

I've been part of Coastal Young Farmers for eight years and have been club chair for the past year and a half.

**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?

Definitely the people you meet along the way. Most Young Farmers members are decent people, and getting to know them, interacting, and forming new friendships has been the biggest highlight for me.

**3** How did you become involved in agriculture?

I mainly got into farming through family and work experience.

**4** What is your job now? Tell us about your role and your journey so far. If you are farming, please tell us about your operation.

I've been farming for nine years and managing for the past four. I'm currently on a 500-cow dairy farm, milking mainly KiwiCross cows through a 50-bail rotary.

**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?

The future of farming is looking tough for a lot of young people starting out. Between never-ending regulations and fewer opportunities than there used to be, it definitely has its challenges and can be hard to push through at times.

**6** What are your future plans?

I'm hoping to get into a herd and eventually buy into a farm. I honestly couldn't see myself wanting to do anything else.

**7** Who has been your biggest inspiration in agriculture, and why?

A big shout-out to our club vice-chair, Rhiannon Whelen. She's been a good friend to me, and I really appreciate her support and friendship.



**Nomination —** Carlos does a great job extending our club into the wider community. He regularly organises catch-ups with other clubs, has started a monthly community potluck, and recently organised a skills day — even lining up a digger for people to have a drive. Coastal Taranaki is a pretty quiet club that just gets on with it, so it's been awesome to see more collaboration happening between clubs.

## ENTER THE NATIONAL LAMB DAY COLOURING COMPETITION.

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[fmg.co.nz/lambday](http://fmg.co.nz/lambday)

We're here for the good of the country.





# Ranger record attempt revs up at Methven



**Claire Inkson**

RURAL  
EDITOR

What started as a grassroots addition to the Methven A&P Show has quickly become one of its biggest crowd-pullers — and this year, the Methven Ute Muster is aiming even higher.

Running alongside the event, organisers are preparing for a Ford Ranger world record attempt, alongside a growing line-up of ute categories and a new women-led class designed to broaden who the event speaks to.

Run as part of the annual Methven Show, the Ute Muster has been steadily building momentum since its launch in 2021.

Organiser Douglas Richards, who joined the show committee last year, says the event is about more than shiny vehicles.

“It’s about getting people off the farm and back into the community,” he says. “Whether you’re a farmer, a tradie, a townie or a weekend warrior — if you’ve got a ute or a four-wheel drive, there’s a place for you.”

This year’s headline attraction will be a Ford Ranger world record attempt, aiming to line up as many Rangers as possible on the day.

The attempt will be held on



This year’s headline attraction alongside the Methven Ute Muster will be a Ford Ranger world record attempt, aiming to line up as many Rangers as possible on the day.

a paddock adjacent to the Ute Muster.

Richards says the idea reflects the reality of rural Canterbury.

“The Ford Ranger has had a massive impact on our area. Farmers, tradies, townies — just about everyone has one, or has had one at some point,” he says.

“It’s a legacy vehicle in rural communities, and this is a chance to show what our area is built on.”

While the record attempt focuses

on Rangers, organisers are keen to stress that all utes are welcome at the Muster, which includes around 11 judged categories ranging from pre-1986 vehicles through to best accessorised, best modified, cleanest ute and dirtiest ute.

Among the additions this year is Hers Not His, a new category celebrating women who own and work their utes.

“We want everyone included,” Richards says. “There are a lot of

women with awesome utes, but sometimes events like this can feel male-dominated. This is about recognising the women who are out there using their utes every day and encouraging them to come along.”

The Ute Muster also features a crowd-favourite ute tug-of-war, run using a custom tow bar system.

Last year, 15 utes competed, with one blown differential later turned into a trophy — a reminder that the event leans just as much into fun

as it does competition.

Entry to the Ute Muster is \$20 for adults, which includes show entry, with proceeds feeding directly back into the Methven A&P Show. Children are free.

Funds raised help support local causes, including community halls, calf and lamb clubs, scholarships and charities such as the Methven Care Trust.

This year, more than \$6,000 worth of prizes are already confirmed, ranging from Prezzy cards to products supplied by Canterbury businesses.

To help gauge numbers for the record attempt, organisers are encouraging Ford Ranger owners to register ahead of time, though registration will not be compulsory.

On-the-day entry remains available, ensuring the event stays accessible for those who decide at the last minute.

Richards says the aim is to make it easy for people to turn up and take part.

“We don’t want anything that puts people off,” he says. “If the weather’s good and people decide on the day to come along, that’s exactly what we want.”

As the Methven Show approaches, organisers are hopeful the combination of community spirit, friendly rivalry and a potential world record will draw utes — and people — from well beyond the district.

For Richards, the goal is simple: “Make it bigger, make it better, and make sure everyone feels welcome.”

## METHVEN UTE MUSTER 2026



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## METHVEN UTE MUSTER — EVENT INFO

**When:** Methven A&P Show Day, 2026

**Where:** Methven Showgrounds, Canterbury

**What:** Ute Muster featuring a **Ford Ranger world record attempt**, multiple judged categories, ute tug-of-war and the new **Hers Not His** category.

**Register (optional):** Ford Ranger owners are encouraged to register ahead of time to help organisers plan numbers.

👉 <https://www.proudtobeafarmernz.com/utemuster>

**More information:** Methven A&P Show — <https://www.methvenshow.co.nz>

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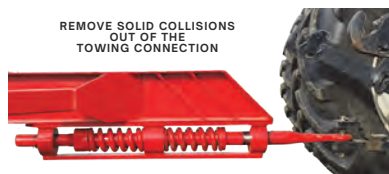
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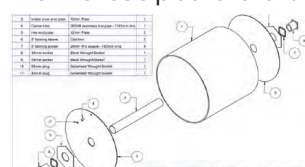


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# A life woven in wool

Beverley Forrester was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in this year's New Year's Honour list – but she remains as humble as ever. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



When I meet Beverley Forrester at her home in Leithfield, I am greeted with a warm hug and a fresh batch of scones smothered in homemade blackcurrant jam.

"I made it in December. I quite like preserving — apricots too. I'm a bit like a squirrel."

It's such a humble, country welcome that you would never guess Forrester has just added one of the highest honours to an already remarkable list of achievements — being appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the wool and fashion industries.

"You don't do things expecting recognition. Things just evolve," she says.

"Who would've thought I'd end up doing trade fairs all around the world?"

She describes the recognition as "mind-blowing" but is quick to downplay it, describing the strong wool industry as "one big family."

"You do things because you love them. Because you enjoy them. Because of the people."

That grounding — in people, place and purpose — runs through every chapter of her story.

## Black Hills: farming, family, and restoration

Forrester's working life is deeply tied to the land.

She and her late husband Jim farmed Black Hills, a fourth-generation sheep and beef property near Waikari.

After Jim's sudden death in 1997, Forrester carried on alone, taking on the challenge of running the North Canterbury property herself.

In the years that followed, she restored the historic buildings at Black Hills and opened the woolshed to visitors, turning the farm into a place where the story of wool, farming and rural life could be shared.

Bus tours, wool groups and international visitors passed through the woolshed — well before agritourism became a familiar term.

"I always believed that if you're going to do something, you do it properly," she says. "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Life at Black Hills shaped much of what followed.

In 2015, Forrester documented that chapter in her memoir, *The Farm at Black Hills*.

The book traces her journey from occupational therapist to farmer and wool entrepreneur, learning to run the farm after Jim's death and building an international wool business along the way.

Proceeds from the book funded three scholarships through Rural Women New Zealand, supporting people working in rural communities, particularly in health and disability-related fields.

## From therapy to textiles

Before wool became her focus, Forrester trained and worked as an occupational therapist, including managing staff at Christchurch Hospital.

"A lot of it transfers," she says.

Planning, managing people, problem-solving — the skills she learned in health later underpinned her business work.

Her interest in wool began early.

She was taught to knit and crochet by her mother and grandmother and grew up around sheep.

Later, through her hospital work, she developed an interest in genetics, which led her towards coloured sheep.

"At that stage, black sheep were often unwanted," she says. "People hid them. I told them to keep them. They had value."

## Taking wool to the world

The wool business gathered momentum in the early 2000s, around the time of the World Corriedale Conference in Christchurch.

"My cousin came out from England and wanted a garment I knitted to take home. His wife wanted one too. They went back, and everyone admired them. That's how it started overseas."

From there, opportunities followed quickly — overseas trade fairs, showrooms and shops in Oxfordshire, and international distribution.

Her garments were selected as official New Zealand gifts, including one presented to HRH Princess Anne.

It wasn't always straightforward — especially in an industry dominated by men.

"I went to the airport office once and was completely dismissed," Forrester says. "They couldn't be bothered. Yes — because I was a woman."

Rather than stopping, she found the right people and kept going.

"I'm a cup-half-full person," she says. "You minimise the risk, then you say yes. Then you work out how to do it."

## The Wool Barn and life in Leithfield

After stepping back from day-to-day farming at Black Hills, Forrester moved to Leithfield Village and built the Wool Barn — a purpose-built space that continues the work she began on the farm.

It's a working space, a place to tell stories, and somewhere people can come and talk wool.

She also mentors people voluntarily, across different industries.

"The principles are the same," she says. "It's year three, year four, year five in business where people really need support."

## Y Wool and new directions

Much of Forrester's current focus is on Y Wool, the brand under which she markets natural, non-woven products made from 100 percent New Zealand crossbred wool.

The range includes wool mats for horticulture and landscaping, insulating textiles, filters, spill kits, and wool knops — small pieces of wool used in bedding and soft furnishings as a natural alternative to foam.



Where other people saw coloured sheep as a nuisance, Forrester saw an opportunity.



Y Wool mats are currently being used under vine at Torlesse Wines in Waipara, just down the road from where Forrester now lives.

The wool mats provide weed control without sprays and help retain soil moisture.

She remains confident in wool's future, particularly as more industries look for alternatives to synthetics.

"I always say it's our number one product," she says. "We just have to keep telling its story."

Rural women and changing communities

A lifelong member of Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ), Forrester has held leadership roles and remains strongly connected to rural communities.

She acknowledges, however, that as important as organisations like RWNZ are – times are changing.

"Everybody's busy," she says. "People need two incomes now. Women are working hard. "Life's different to how it used to be."

But she believes involvement in community organisations is worth the effort - even when time is stretched.

"If you want something to work, you've got to put a bit of effort in," she says.

Despite a busy working life, Forrester still finds time to garden, bake, and has even taken up line dancing.

"You've got to take time to do those things," Forrester says. "That's your time out. When you live in a small district, you're part of the community."



Land-mats, made with non-woven cross bred wool provide a sustainable, chemical-free alternative to sprays when combating weeds.



Beverley Forrester in the wool barn with a selection of garments — including those featured in Fashion Week.



Wool provides an alternative to synthetics in bedding and soft furnishings.

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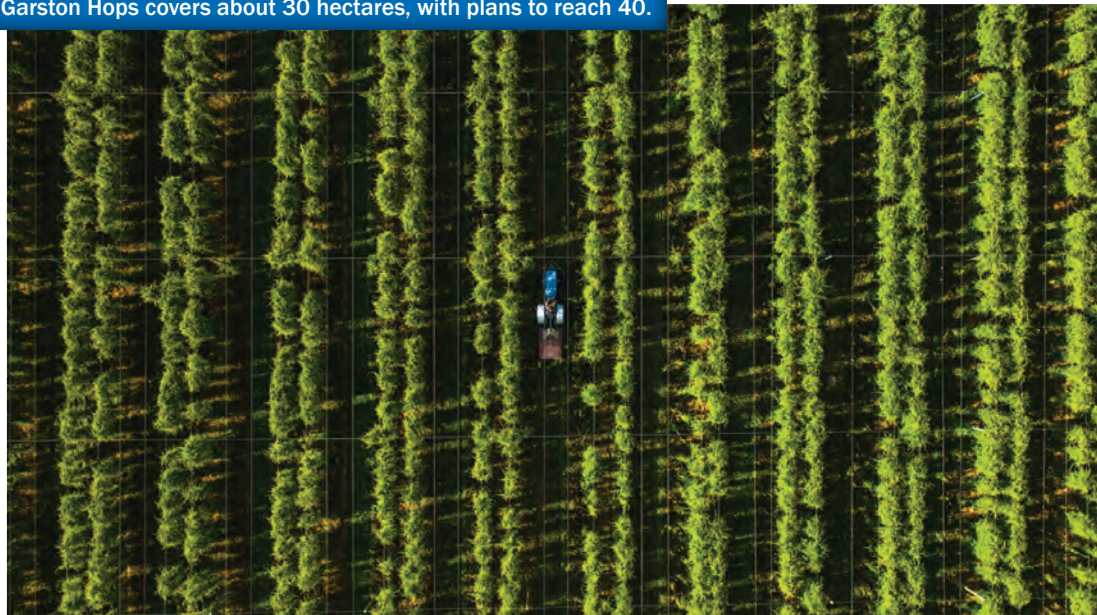


# Growing Hops at the end of the world

Garston Hops, owned and operated by James (right) and Lizette McNamee and their family, has become the southernmost commercial hop farm on the planet. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Garston Hops covers about 30 hectares, with plans to reach 40.



**Claire Inkson**  
RURAL EDITOR

**D**eep in the heart of Southland, at latitude 45 degrees south, sits one of the world's most unexpected horticultural ventures.

Garston Hops, owned and operated by James and Lizette McNamee and their family,

has become the southernmost commercial hop farm on the planet.

What started as a small experiment has grown into a thriving business supplying breweries from Invercargill to Auckland and across the world.

The McNamee farm has been in the family for more than 140 years, run by four generations of sheep farmers.

But as production pressures grew, the couple began questioning how they could keep the land in family hands for their two sons.

Farming sheep alone was struggling to make the numbers

stack up.

"We were looking for something that would let us keep farming without changing the whole farm," Lizette says. "Sheep just were not making money on the size of land we have. So, we started looking at what people grow on the same latitude in the Northern Hemisphere, and that is how we arrived at hops."

In 2016, they planted their first 50 plants in a sheltered corner of the property, now known as the Tree Surrounded Garden.

Today, Garston Hops covers about 30 hectares, with plans to reach 40.

The family grows iconic New



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Their greatest advantage is also their biggest challenge.

Garston sits squarely in the Southern Hemisphere hop belt, with long daylight hours and cold winters that hops love.

"They want lots of daylight, and they want a proper winter shutdown," Lizette says. "They like to hibernate before spring. Garston gives them exactly that."

No other commercial hop farm in the world shares this latitude.

### Understanding the latitude

Hops grow best between 35 and 55 degrees latitude in both hemispheres.

Garston sits at 45 degrees south, which mirrors major hop-growing regions at 45 degrees north in Europe and the United States.

The growing conditions are similar because they are the same distance from the equator, but on opposite sides of the planet.

What makes Garston unique is that, although many hop farms operate at 45 degrees north, there are no other commercial hop farms at 45 degrees south.

The McNamees used northern latitude research to guide them, but the flavour and aroma of Garston-grown hops remain entirely their own because no one else farms hops at this southern latitude.

The result is a unique terroir that brewers quickly noticed.

When Altitude Brewing in Queenstown brewed two beers using the same recipe, one with Garston hops and one with Nelson-grown hops, the difference was striking.

"I will not say ours are better, but they are definitely different. It's like wine," Lizette says. "The flavour and aroma depend on the soil, the water, and the climate. We are the only people in the world growing hops at this latitude."

Growing hops in a remote part of Southland has brought steep challenges.

The McNamees had no neighbours to borrow specialised machinery from and no local advisers who understood hop nutrition or irrigation needs.

"Even finding the right spray nozzles was impossible south of Nelson," Lizette says. "We are learning every day."

From 2016 to 2021, the couple trialled and learned.

In 2021, they committed to commercial production, planting five hectares in their first year and adding more every season.

They grow, harvest, and dry all hops on the home farm, then send them to Nelson for pelletising. They now handle their own sales, logistics and export administration, often teaching themselves as they go.

One of their proudest moments came early on when Tree House Brewing Company, the largest craft brewer in the world, visited during harvest.

"We did not even realise at first who they were. Our twelve-year-old son showed them around because we were busy. Later, we found out who they were. That was a huge moment. It made us realise we were producing something world-class," Lizette says.

Although the work is demanding, the McNamees believe Southland has enormous potential to grow niche, high-quality products.

Their pride in the region is also the inspiration behind one of the most unique annual events in the rural calendar.

### A harvest journey like no other

The Garston Hops Harvest Event, created in partnership with Altitude Brewing, brings visitors into the thick of harvest season while celebrating the region's produce, history and ingenuity.

The 2026 event will take place on Saturday, March 21 and is already shaping up to be the biggest yet.

Freshly picked hops begin their journey on the picturesque farm before being transported by Clydesdale horse-drawn carriage from Garston to Fairlight.

From there, the historic Kingston Flyer steam train carries the fragrant green cones to Kingston, allowing visitors to step back into a piece of Central Otago heritage.

A scenic boat ride across Lake Whakatipu completes the journey, delivering the hops to Altitude Brewing, where they are used immediately in a one-day-only fresh hop brew.

"It is not just about us. We want to bring something special into the region and keep the history of how things used to move, alive," Lizette says. "People love being part of the whole journey. It connects farming, brewing, tourism and local food."

Local producers also take part, with Southland-grown lamb on the menu and meals prepared by businesses such as The Apple Shed and Smoke and Pickle.

For many attendees, it is the only time they will ever see fresh hops harvested, transported and brewed all in one day.

Lizette says the event has grown

The Kingston Flyer is a highlight of the Garston Hops Harvest event.



steadily.

"This will be our sixth year. It is getting bigger and bigger. We want to showcase Southland and show people what can be achieved in our part of the world."

The McNamees see the event as another way to create pride and connection in a remote

community that has rallied around their venture.

"We did not get here by ourselves. People have volunteered at harvest, driven tractors and helped us for weeks at a time. We want to give something back by creating something the whole region can be proud of."

### GARSTON HOPS HARVEST EVENT 2026

Saturday, March 21 2026, 7:30am — 6pm  
Garston to Queenstown with an option departing from Queenstown in the morning, or to make your own way. Get in touch if you're looking to depart from Invercargill or Te Anau as transport may be made available if there's enough interest. Experience the journey of the world's southernmost hops as they travel from farm to brewery in a single day.

- Hop picking at Garston Hops
- Clydesdale horse transport to Fairlight
- Kingston Flyer heritage train to Kingston
- Scenic boat cruise to Queenstown
- Fresh hop brew and harvest celebration at Altitude Brewing
- Meals, tastings, beers, farm tour and all transport included

**More information:** [garstonhops.co.nz](http://garstonhops.co.nz)

Follow Garston Hops and Altitude Brewing on social media, or @garstonhopsharvestevent on Instagram for ticket announcements

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# Running the long road for brain cancer research

CLAIRE INKSON

Christchurch-based neXtgen Agri chief executive Mark Ferguson has set himself a significant challenge for 2026 — walking, running or riding 2,000 kilometres over the year to raise funds and awareness for brain cancer research.

The challenge, called TwentySix2000, was inspired by the diagnosis of one of his closest mates and long-time colleagues, Professor Andrew “Thommo” Thompson, who was diagnosed with brain cancer last year.

“As soon as you start looking into brain cancer, you realise how little is actually known about it and how limited the research funding is,” Ferguson says.

“Cancer research always needs more support, but brain cancer really stands out for how underfunded it is.”

Rather than focusing on individual support, Ferguson says Thompson was keen that any fundraising effort be directed towards the disease itself.

That led to the decision to support the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation and to create a challenge others could also take part in.

The goal is simple: accumulate 2,000 kilometres across 2026 — roughly 5.5km a day — through walking, running or other forms of movement.

Participants can set their own targets, whether that’s 2,000km, 1,000km or something smaller.

“It’s not about competition or fitness levels,” Ferguson says. “People can make it whatever suits them. Some are walking,

some are riding, some are just doing what they can. The point is raising awareness and getting people involved.”

More than 50 people have already joined the challenge via Strava, with participants spread across New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the US. Many have their own personal connection to brain cancer.

Ferguson, who has previously completed a 1,500km running challenge, says the format also encourages healthy habits.

“Having a goal like this keeps you moving. You can’t really skip days without paying for it later.”

While the kilometres matter, Ferguson says donations — from individuals or businesses — are just as important.

“Not everyone can commit to the distance, and that’s fine. Donating or sharing the challenge is just as valuable.”

## GET INVOLVED

TwentySix2000 is raising awareness and funds for brain cancer research.

**Join the challenge:**

<https://www.strava.com/clubs/1858801>

**Donate:**

<https://fundraise.curebraincancer.org.au/fundraisers/markferguson/twentsix2000>

Mark Ferguson, chief executive of neXtgen Agri, is taking on a 2,000km movement challenge across 2026 to raise funds and awareness for brain cancer research. PHOTO SUPPLIED



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**The Farming Fast Five: where we ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture, and what farming means to them. Today we chat to Culverden dairy farmer Allie King.**

## 1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I was born and raised in Christchurch, having no knowledge or experience of farming, let alone the fact that Canterbury dairy farming was quite literally on our doorsteps! My family and I lived in the suburbs of Christchurch, with Dad being a banker and mum a lawyer, I had only ever moved house once in my life- a stark contrast to my future of living on dairy farms and shifting on gypsy days to progress in the industry.

At 19 I applied for a role with Customs and trained at Police College in Wellington for the role. It's at this time I met Ben. Ben was a livestock agent living in Christchurch, I had no knowledge of what his job entailed. We soon decided to move to Ashburton together where he decided to try his career at farming and I worked admin for a dairy servicing company. That's where the intro to farming began for me!

## 2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation

We are currently 50:50 share milking in North Canterbury, 650 cows on roughly 170 ha. We have a mix of Crossbred and Jersey cows, running two herds consisting of the separated breeds.

## 3 What challenges have you faced in your farming business, and how have you tackled those challenges?

There have been many challenges. I think navigating the shift in roles as a woman in farming is one of the biggest and ongoing challenges. Often, the journey starts with the husband farming while the wife works off-farm, but as you progress into contract milking and sharemilking, the farm suddenly becomes your role too; it becomes a joint business. This is a unique challenge

for many women, particularly those of us without a rural background.

Finding the balance between working off-farm, supporting your husband, managing the administrative side of the business, and eventually starting a family; transitioning to a point where you leave "your job" for the farm and your family and they become your sole priorities. Another equally significant challenge for me, which coincides with the first one, is the "imposter syndrome" feeling. Feeling like a complete fraud, and feeling like I am not qualified to be doing what I'm doing or to label myself a "farmer" rather than a "farmer's wife". I really struggle to answer the "what do you do?" question!

## 4 What has been a major highlight for you in your farming journey? (e.g. achievements, community support, working with family, farm improvements, a favourite memory)

A huge highlight for me has been my involvement in the Dairy Women's Network. It's an organisation which has been around for over 25 years, supporting and growing women in dairy. I started attending their events and eventually became a volunteer regional leader for Canterbury, and have moved into the role of Hub leader (team leader) for Canterbury and North Otago, leading the team of volunteers as well as liaising with head office and our wonderful network partners who fund us. This role has given me so much more confidence, widened my network and given me a community where I feel I belong. I feel a little less like a fish in a huge pond and more like a fish in the right pond!

## 5 What advice would you have for the next generation of farmers?

Don't be afraid to take opportunities and chances! Grow yourself and soak information up like a sponge! Get involved in discussion groups and organisations like DWN, you learn and network from this! You sometimes have to give up to go up, this may mean sacrificing some things or moving jobs to move up the ladder.



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# A fitting farewell for farmers' best workmates



**Claire Inkson**

RURAL EDITOR

For Mid Canterbury deer farmer Duncan Humm, starting a pet cremation business was never part of the plan.

"I definitely never woke up one day thinking I'd like to start a cremation business," he says. "It just sort of evolved."

Humm, who is also co-founder of farming platform NZ Farming, runs Summerland Pet Cremation alongside his wife Lorna, a local veterinarian.

The idea grew over years of conversation, shaped by what Lorna saw daily in her work and a gap they both felt needed filling in Mid Canterbury.

Lorna has a lot of experience in supporting families through the euthanasia of their beloved pets, both at the vet clinic and in family homes.

While cremation has always been an option for pets, she saw an opportunity to provide a more personal, compassionate and local service.

"Before we started, if people wanted pet cremation in Mid Canterbury, their only real option was for their pet to travel over an hour away," Duncan explains. "After everything families had just been through, it felt impersonal."

For farmers, the situation was often more complicated. While many still bury dogs on the farm, that's not always practical or possible — particularly for shepherds on contract, people renting, or families preparing to move. And for some dogs, burial just didn't feel like enough.

"Farm dogs aren't just dogs," Duncan says. "They're part of the team. Your best workmates. You spend every day with them, and when you lose one, it hits hard."

The turning point came unexpectedly. One of Lorna's farming clients, remembering the care she had shown when their dog was put down years earlier, rang with a question.

"Do you want to buy a crematorium?"

The couple had just sold their farm and moved to a lifestyle block near Wanaka. Left behind on the property was a virtually new pet cremation unit the previous owners no longer wanted.

"At first I said no," Duncan laughs. "I thought we already had enough going on. But the next morning I woke up and thought — actually, why not? It actually makes a lot of sense, and fits with our life and Lorna's experience."

Within months, the crematorium was relocated and set up on their farm. Summerland Pet Cremation was quietly born.

Most of the business now comes through local veterinary clinics. When a pet is euthanised, families

are offered a local cremation option, removing the need for them to organise transport or make difficult decisions in the moment.

"If someone rings us directly, we just work around what suits them," Duncan says. "But the goal is always the same — to make it as easy as possible on what's already a really tough day."

Families can choose between return and non-return cremation.

For return cremations, ashes are carefully processed and returned in the families' choice of a simple eco box, ideal for ash scattering or planting, a Rimu wooden urn which can be engraved, beautiful ceramic urns made locally, or a wool urn.

Some families choose to have ashes turned into Reteriti stones — smooth remembrance stones they can hold in their hand.

For non-return services, ashes

are respectfully scattered in native and other tree plantings on the farm, giving pets a permanent resting place.

Behind the scenes, the process is meticulous.

Each animal is individually cremated, with settings adjusted by weight.

Once complete, ashes are refined to a consistent texture before being packaged and returned either to the clinic or directly to the family.

A thorough tracking system ensures animals are identified from start to finish, and the couple take great pride in ensuring that the process is seamless and personal.

"It's not something people really think about, but it matters," Duncan says. "People want to know their animal has been treated with care the whole way through."

They've cremated everything from cats and dogs through to rabbits and birds. The crematorium can handle animals up to 350–400kg, making it suitable for farm dogs, companion animals and even lifestyle pets.

What Duncan wasn't prepared for was the emotional weight of the work.

"You expect it to be hard," he says. "But the toughest part isn't kids crying — it's grown men folding when they lose a dog they've worked with for years. That's a pain I can relate to on a deeply personal level."

The experience has given him a deeper appreciation for vets and vet nurses, who deal with grief daily. It has also reinforced why doing the service locally matters.

"You wouldn't want to be in this business if you were heartless," he says. "Feeling it means you're

doing it right."

The name Summerland reflects that care. In many cultures, the summer land is the place souls go on their next journey.

"Our farm feels like a pretty good place for that," Duncan says. "Quiet, respectful, and close to home."

Attitudes towards working dogs have changed dramatically over the years. Once treated as tools, they are now recognised as intelligent, loyal partners. Summerland offers farmers a way to honour that shift.

"There are still times when burying a dog on the farm feels right," Duncan says. "But now there's another option — one that lets people say goodbye, in a way that matches how much those dogs meant to them."

For more information, go to [summerland.nz](http://summerland.nz)



While Duncan and Lorna Humm never intended on starting a pet cremation business, it's been a natural fit for the Mid Canterbury couple. PHOTO ISLA HUMM



# A head start behind the wheel

Dustin Wright (16) has always had a passion for diesel machinery.  
PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



Waitohi Ag general manager John Svensson (left), who hired Dustin Wright (right) in October last year says it's important for the industry to invest in the next generation.



**Claire Inkson**  
RURAL EDITOR

At just 16, Dustin Wright is already behind the wheel of some of the most advanced machinery on North Canterbury farms — but his passion for all things diesel started well before he ever climbed into a tractor.

Long before this season with Waitohi Ag, Wright had his sights set on trucks.

He's attended major trucking shows in Australia with his father, Iain, who has since pivoted from farming into truck driving across the Tasman.

Wright has been a contributing writer for Little Trucker magazine from a young age.

"I've always been into machinery," Wright says. "Trucks were probably the first obsession."

That early exposure — on farms, around trucks, and travelling with his dad — laid the foundation for what has become a natural progression into agricultural contracting.

"I'd have been five or six driving with Dad in the passenger seat," Wright says. "I first drove by myself when I was about eight."

Now in Year 12 at Christchurch Boys' High School, Wright started his first season with Waitohi Ag during the October exam break and has been working through the busy silage and balage period.

"It's just something I've grown up around," he says. "Diesel, machinery, being outside. I enjoy working by myself and getting the job done."

## Learning on the job

Wright currently operates a range of machinery, including a CLAAS 610 tractor, as well as John Deere tractors and mowers, along

with rakes and the wrapper.

"The biggest challenge has been learning new machines and different brands," he says. "Things like the wrapper, mowing and raking were all new to me, so it's been about getting your head around how everything works."

Despite his age, Wright says he's never felt out of place.

"The farmers have been really good. I haven't had a moment where I've felt like I shouldn't be here because I'm only 16," he says. "I've grown up around most of them, so that helps."

The hours don't faze him either. "It's easy enough. You just carry on and get it done."

Asked what it feels like to be trusted with expensive machinery so young, Wright doesn't hesitate.

"I feel pretty lucky," he says. "You've just got to go slow and steady and be thankful you've been given the chance."

## Looking ahead

Wright plans to finish one more year of school before heading off to travel and work overseas.

"Australia, the UK, maybe America," he says. "I'll come back for another season next year."

While trucks remain a long-term goal, tractors are filling the gap until he's old enough for his truck licence.

"It's all burning diesel in some form," he laughs.

His advice to other young people thinking about contracting is simple.

"You've just got to be passionate, find the right company that's willing to give you a go, and not be afraid of hard work."

## A Farmer-led approach

Waitohi Ag was formed in the 1970s by a group of local farmers who wanted to service their own contracting needs.

Over time, the farmer-led cooperative evolved into a professional contracting business servicing farms across North Canterbury.

Today, Waitohi Ag specialises

in precision planting and drilling, cultivation, and hay, balage and silage operations, with a strong focus on reliability, modern machinery and delivering a consistently high-quality service for its clients.

Waitohi Ag general manager and Hawarden farmer John Svensson knows taking on young operators isn't for everyone — but for Waitohi Ag, it's central to who they are.

"It's huge," Svensson says. "We're a family-focused business, supporting local families and local farmers. We are farmers working for farmers."

Svensson started with the company as an operator, later bought into the business, and stepped into the general manager role in November.

Creating a pathway for young people entering the industry matters, he says.

"At some point, the next generation will be running the company. You've got to put the groundwork in early, give them a chance, and help them enjoy what they do."

## Training, safety and support

With a small team of around six staff, including other younger operators, training and support are a priority.

"It's about doing the front-end work properly," Svensson says.

"Making sure they're trained, supported and ready before they're operating on their own."

Fatigue management is also taken seriously, with strong support behind the scenes.

"Our partners and families play a big role," he says. "Making sure the team's fed, watered, and looking after each other during long days."

Svensson says farmers are generally open to seeing younger operators behind the wheel.

"There's a real understanding now that we need to invest in the next generation," he says. "It won't just happen by itself. You've got to be proactive."

Dustin Wright began driving tractors early, sitting on his father Iain's lap when he was just five years old.



## Community at the core

As a locally owned and operated business, Waitohi Ag is deeply connected to the community it works in.

"We support local clubs and local shows, we're part of the community," Svensson says. "The community supports us, and we support it right back."

Looking ahead, the focus is on steady growth without losing what matters.

"We want to grow the business while maintaining the quality of service our loyal clients expect," he says. "It's exciting, but it's about

doing it right."

## A message to young people

Svensson's advice to young people wanting a career in agriculture is straightforward.

"Do the basics right. Be keen. Keep trying," he says. "Someone will give you a chance eventually. Passion and enthusiasm go a long way, but you've still got to turn up and put the work in."

For Wright, it comes back to that first opportunity.

"Find someone who's willing to give you a go," he says.



# Mustering connection for rural women

Festival director Kristy McGregor says the Shepherdess Muster is about “filling your own cup so you can give back to everyone else.” PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Yoga is just one of the sessions available to women attending the Muster.



Over three days, women can choose from more than 25 workshops, speakers and creative sessions spanning arts, health and wellbeing, and business and entrepreneurship.



**Claire Inkson**  
RURAL EDITOR

From 6–8 March 2026, the small Southland community of Tokanui will host the Shepherdess Muster — a three-day festival created to give women something many don’t allow themselves very often: time.

Festival director and Shepherdess magazine publisher Kristy McGregor describes it as a deliberate pause from the constant demands many women carry.

“It’s a weekend to leave the kids at home, or the partner or husband, and just get away and do something for yourself.

“Women are pulled in so many directions and wear so many hats, and this is about filling your own cup so you can keep giving back to everyone else too.

“It’s fun. It’s about connecting with other women in the same boat. It’s about learning. It’s about creative arts.”

Tokanui was not chosen by accident.

McGregor says the community actively invited the Muster south, and its story reflects that of many small rural towns across the country.

Tokanui sits off the main drag for large events and has faced the same pressures as many provincial centres, including the loss of essential services.

Held at the rugby club grounds, the Muster organisers say the event is designed to have the “spirit of a retreat with the energy of a festival.”

Over three days, women can choose from more than 25 workshops, speakers and creative sessions spanning arts, health and wellbeing, and business and entrepreneurship, with everyone coming together for shared meals and evening entertainment.

A defining feature of the Shepherdess Muster is that everyone stays onsite together for the full weekend.

Camping is part of the experience, whether women bring their own tent, caravan, horse float or swag, or book one of the pre-set tents available in twin or triple

share.

While it’s a paddock-based set-up, rather than luxury accommodation, there are shower facilities and shared amenities, making it practical as well as relaxed.

That shared environment is where much of the connection happens.

You’ll see the same faces again and again — at the showers, lining up for coffee in the morning, or sitting together at meals — creating an easy familiarity that builds over the weekend.

The simplicity of being away from everyday routines has proved powerful.

Reflecting on the 2024 Muster, McGregor says, “Women said the best thing was switching off completely and being present.

“There are heaps of conferences in fancy city hotels. This is different: connecting with each other, being on the whenua. It creates a really special space.”

The 2026 programme brings together national names and strong southern talent.

The line-up includes comedian Michèle A’Court, sex and relationship therapist Jo Robertson and PledgeMe co-founder Anna Guenther, alongside Southland and Otago contributors including pelvic floor physiotherapist Anna Thompson, Zumba sessions led by Sheila Smith, workshops with Sharne Parkinson based on traditional Māori instruments, and dance workshops and performances from South Pole Dance.

Tickets are all-inclusive, covering meals, workshops, speakers, entertainment and BYO camping.

General attendee tickets are \$839 inc. GST, with discounted local tickets for Waihopai Toetoe community board residents and kaumātua (over 70 years) options available at \$599 inc. GST.

Business and Pay It Forward tickets are also available, and pre-set tent accommodation can be added for those who prefer not to bring their own gear.

For McGregor, the aim is not just a good weekend away, but something that lasts longer. “It’s about doing something for yourself,” she says - and returning home feeling refreshed, connected and supported, long after the tents are packed up and the paddock is quiet again.

## SHEPHERDESS MUSTER 2026 — EVENT DETAILS

**Where:** Tokanui Rugby Club Grounds, Murihiku, Southland

**When:** 6–8 March 2026

**Tickets (all-inclusive):**

- General attendee: \$839 inc. GST
- Local (Waihopai Toetoe Community Board residents): \$599 inc. GST
- Kaumātua (70 years and over): \$599 inc. GST
- Pay It Forward (scholarship support): \$839 inc. GST
- Business & corporate: \$1,119 inc. GST

Tickets include all meals, workshops, speakers, entertainment and BYO camping.

Pre-set tent accommodation is available at an additional cost.

**Buy tickets:** [www.shepherdessmuster.co.nz](http://www.shepherdessmuster.co.nz)



# Ashburton Forks Catchment Group: A Year On

Over the past year, the Ashburton Forks Catchment Group has moved from establishment into delivery. The emphasis has been on practical action, learning from what's happening on the ground, and building a group that provides value for the people farming in the catchment.

The group covers the Ashburton Forks, Staveley and Alford Forest areas, bounded roughly by the Rangitata Diversion Race, Thompsons Track, and the North and South Branches of the Ashburton River. It's a distinctive part of Mid Canterbury, sitting close to the foothills and containing a number of regionally significant waterways. Those features have naturally shaped the priorities the group has chosen to focus on.

Two main workstreams have carried most of the effort over the past year: pest and predator control, and water quality and biodiversity monitoring.

On the pest and predator side, much of the progress has come from farmers simply getting on with the job. Across the catchment, members have been shooting, trapping and controlling pests as part of normal farm management, but with more coordination and shared focus than before.

To date, recorded control across the group includes more than 2,500 possums and over 2,700 hares, along with rabbits, magpies, rats, cats, mustelids and a range of other pest species. These numbers aren't about targets or reporting for the sake of it. They reflect a

concerted effort to protect planting investments already made by farmers and to reduce ongoing pressure on biodiversity values across the catchment.

Auto-traps have played an important role. There are currently 31 AT220 traps operating across the area, most owned by the group and some privately. They have proven effective, particularly for possums and rats, and have also captured a range of other pest species. One clear lesson so far is that pest control is far more effective when it is coordinated. Without a catchment-wide approach, reinvasion happens quickly and progress is easily lost.

Water quality monitoring has been the other major focus. Since the group's formation, farmers have collected 777 nitrate-nitrogen samples from waterways across the catchment. This has provided a robust baseline and a clearer understanding of conditions across different parts of the system, rather than relying on isolated or one-off measurements.

Independent input has been a key part of this work. Hydrologist Brett Painter has reviewed and assisted with the design and analysis of the monitoring programme, providing confidence that the data being collected is fit for purpose. That independent oversight is important, both for credibility and to ensure monitoring effort is proportionate and well targeted.

In addition, eDNA testing was completed at a number of sites across the catchment. This provided an objective snapshot



of aquatic biodiversity present within local waterways and helped build a more complete picture of catchment health. The results have been useful in informing future monitoring and reinforcing the value of ongoing protection and enhancement work.

Support from the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC) has been critical in enabling the group to function effectively. Assistance with facilitation, training and funding has allowed the group to operate

in a structured way, rather than relying entirely on volunteer time. Planned GIS mapping of the catchment will further strengthen understanding of water flows, biodiversity values and monitoring coverage.

Like most catchment groups, long-term funding remains a challenge. The group currently operates on a modest membership fee, which contributes to costs but does not fully fund facilitation or projects. Maintaining financial sustainability while retaining a

farmer-led approach will remain an ongoing focus.

At its core, the Ashburton Forks Catchment Group is about building shared understanding and giving farmers good information to support their own decisions. Progress has been steady rather than flashy, but it has been practical, grounded and driven by the people farming the land.

**Will Wright**  
*Facilitator, Ashburton Forks Catchment Group*

## Built for Good

CLAIRE INKSON

Farmers could walk away from this year's Southern Field Days with more than ideas and contacts — they could come away with a brand-new home, with every dollar raised supporting rural wellbeing.

For Adam Newton from Adam Newton Homes, taking a home to the Southern Field Days isn't new. But deciding to auction one — and donate the proceeds — was a step further.

"This is the second year we've taken a house out there," Newton says. "We tossed up whether we raffled a house or auctioned one, and it just came back to wanting to support a local charity that does real work in the region where a lot of our clients are based."

That led naturally to the Southland Rural Support Trust.

"It was a pretty organic fit," he says. "They were more than happy to come on board, and it just made sense."

### Built below cost, backed by the community

The home — a high-spec, four-bedroom transportable build — is being delivered below cost, with suppliers and subcontractors across Southland stepping up to support the project.

"We're providing the home substantially below cost," Newton explains. "Pretty much all our suppliers and subcontractors have either absorbed costs themselves or gone back to their suppliers for discounts."

Adam Newton Homes has also removed its usual margin.

"As long as it sells somewhere around what it would normally retail for, we should be able to write a fairly sizeable cheque to the Rural Support Trust," he says.

While the final valuation is still being confirmed, Newton is confident.

"I'd be disappointed if it didn't start with a six," he says. "It's quite a fancy home, and we've added a bit of extra value into it."

Designed to go almost anywhere, the home has been designed with flexibility firmly in mind — something Newton says reflects how rural buyers are thinking.

"It's a four-bedroom, two-bathroom home, but we've gone for a bit of a holiday or beach house vibe," he says. "It could go pretty much anywhere in New Zealand, within reason."

That includes high wind zones, higher snow loading, and coastal environments.

"We've beefed up the windows, roofing and specifications so it can be placed close to the coast — up to about 100 metres from the beach," he says. "It opens up a pretty wide range of sites."

Transportable builds now make up around 20 percent of the business, alongside traditional onsite builds.

"It's something we diversified into three or four years ago," Newton says. "When we took a house to Field Days last time, it was incredibly well received. We probably had five or six thousand people through it over the three days."



For Adam Newton, auctioning off one of the company's transportable homes is a win-win for both his business, and the Southland Rural Support Trust. PHOTO SUPPLIED

### Not just staff housing

While transportable homes are often associated with farm staff accommodation, Newton says the appeal is far broader.

"It could work as staff housing, but also for tourism, lifestyle blocks, or even a manager's house," he says. "We've added a covered outdoor courtyard with a gas fire — something new for us — and it really adds to that holiday-home feel."

"It wouldn't feel out of place in a lot of settings."

Newton is upfront about the fact that the project benefits his business too — but says that doesn't diminish its value.

"It's a bit of a double-edged sword," he says. "We get a lot of

exposure out of it, which is great, but we were going to take a house to Field Days anyway. This just turns it into a win-win."

More importantly, he says, it puts something tangible back into the rural sector.

"The Trust does an incredible

job, and recent events really underline how important that support is," he says.

### Confidence returning

Despite ongoing challenges in the building sector, Newton says enquiries are starting to lift — particularly in rural areas.

"We've probably bucked the trend a little bit because of diversifying into transportables and positioning ourselves at the higher end," he says. "We didn't want to compete purely on price."

"There's been a noticeable lift lately. More enquiries, more of the smaller jobs coming through — kitchens, bathrooms. When people start spending at that level, it's usually a sign that confidence is coming back."

### On show — and up for auction

The home will be on display at Southern Field Days before being auctioned on site — a logistics exercise Newton admits is no small feat.

"It's a big home to take out there — around 160 square metres," he says. "The last one we took was 95, so this is a step up."

"But it's also a great way to show people what's possible."

### AUCTION DETAILS

**What:** Architecturally designed transportable home auction  
**When:** Thursday, 12 February 2026, 11.30am  
**Where:** Southern Field Days, Waimumu  
**Site:** 447  
**Auctioneer:** Country & Co Realty  
**Built by:** Adam Newton Homes  
**Proceeds:** Donated to the Southland Rural Support Trust



# What to expect when you see a mental health professional for the first time

KATHRYN WRIGHT

Following on from last month's article about recognising when it might be time to seek professional support, this month we're looking at what actually happens when you see a counsellor, psychologist, or therapist for the first time.

Rural people are good at getting on with things. We fix machinery with whatever's in the shed, we check on neighbours after a storm, and we shoulder more than we ever say out loud. But even the most capable people hit patches where the load gets too heavy. Talking to a mental health professional can be one of the most practical tools you'll ever use.

Still, that first appointment can feel like stepping into unknown territory. While every professional works slightly differently, the overall process is much more straightforward than most people expect.

## It's Not a Test, and You Can't Get It Wrong

A common worry is that you'll be expected to tell your life story in perfect order, or that you'll be grilled about your feelings. In reality, your first session is simply a conversation. The professional's job is to help you feel comfortable, guide the discussion, and get a sense of what's going on for you.

You don't need to prepare anything. When you're ready, you can start with something like, "Things have been a bit rough lately," or "I'm not sleeping well." From there, they'll ask gentle questions to help you explain what's happening. And yes — professionals get nervous too. We want to do a good job and support you well.

## We'll Explain Ethics and Confidentiality

Privacy is a big concern in small towns. Some people even assume a professional might mention seeing you to their own friends or family. This is completely incorrect. Counsellors and psychologists in New Zealand follow strict confidentiality rules, and we explain these clearly in your first session. In general, what you say stays between you

and the professional, with only a few exceptions — usually around immediate safety concerns. We'll also cover fees, session length, and what happens if we bump into each other at the supermarket. (Most of us won't acknowledge you unless you do first.)

## We Want to Understand Your World

Rural life comes with its own pressures: long hours, isolation, unpredictable weather, financial strain, and the constant sense that animals, land or community rely on you. A good mental health professional knows that context matters. In your first session, we may ask about your work routines, who you live or work with, what stress you're under, how long you've been feeling this way, and

what you've already tried. It can feel personal at first, but without understanding your situation, it's hard to know what will genuinely help.

## We'll Ask What You Want to Get Out of Sessions

You don't need a grand plan. Many people simply want to feel less overwhelmed, communicate better with a partner, or get through a tough season. But having some sense of direction helps. We might ask questions like: "If you were feeling more like the person you want to be, what would you be doing more of? What would you be doing less of? Who would you see more of? Or less of?" These questions help shape a plan that fits your life - practical and achievable, even if it's still a bit

fuzzy.

## It's Normal to Feel Unsure at First

Most people leave their first session feeling some relief, especially if they haven't had anyone to talk to. You've opened the door to something new, and that takes courage. It's also normal to wonder whether you "clicked" with the professional. Like any relationship, it can take a couple of sessions to find your rhythm. If after two or three appointments you still feel uncomfortable or misunderstood, it's okay to try someone else. You shouldn't dread seeing your therapist.

## You're a Human Being

Rural communities pride themselves on resilience, but

resilience doesn't mean carrying everything alone. Seeing a mental health professional isn't a sign of weakness. It's a sign that you're taking your wellbeing seriously - just as you would with a broken bone, a sick animal, or a failing tractor. Counselling is simply another tool in the toolbox. It helps you understand what's going on inside, make sense of stress and find ways to cope that actually work.

If you're thinking about reaching out, that's already a step forward. The first session won't fix everything, but it opens a door - to support, clarity, and a bit more breathing room in a life that often demands more than one person can carry.

*Kathryn Wright  
is a registered counsellor  
[www.kathrynwright.co.nz](http://www.kathrynwright.co.nz)*



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# Are we really prepared for the responsibilities that come with our rights?

I'm not sure about you, but my evening routine includes a nightly reminder (aka constant yelling) at my children to put their toys away before they go in the bin. While I fully support their right to play, I also want them to take responsibility for putting their toys away when they're finished to keep my feet safe from rogue bits of Lego in the lounge.

In many ways, life is much the same. All rights come with responsibilities, usually to prevent harm to others. Where moral obligations are insufficient to prevent harm, these rights are regulated, or an at-fault party is held accountable for the costs they have incurred on others.

However, as a community, we are quick to defend our rights, but often slow to accept the responsibilities and accountabilities that come with these rights.

I recently saw a decision on a case where a developer took a council to court since they issued a subdivision consent on flood-prone land and it got, well, flooded. In this case, the Judge accepted the council's decision as they had advised the developer of the flood risk and accepted the developer's own proposal to

mitigate that risk. I'm sure if the Council did prevent the developer from subdividing the land due to the potential of flooding in a 1 in 1000 year event, then the same developer would also fight the council tooth and nail to be allowed to do so.

Not all court cases have gone to the council though, which has seen them liable for damage from innovative or novel ideas promoted by developers. No doubt the next developer looking to put housing on a flood plain will have a tougher pathway ahead of themselves now. But at what point does a bad investment decision by one person equate to a liability for someone else?

We have already seen the impact on the environment when a "right" is given to a property through irrigation or land use, including the associated benefit of additional land value or revenue, but environmental costs are borne by the community, such as through reduced drinking water quality.

The proposed Natural Environment Act introduces the ability to manage limited resources in different ways, including the provision for relief if property rights are restricted. Potentially, these alternative methods could

open the door to more market-driven approaches to managing resources. For instance, will Selwyn farmers be responsible for paying for the upgrade to the Rolleston water supply? Will water charges be introduced on every cubic metre taken to manage our aquifers? More tools in the toolbox will always be a good thing, however the outcome may not suit everyone.

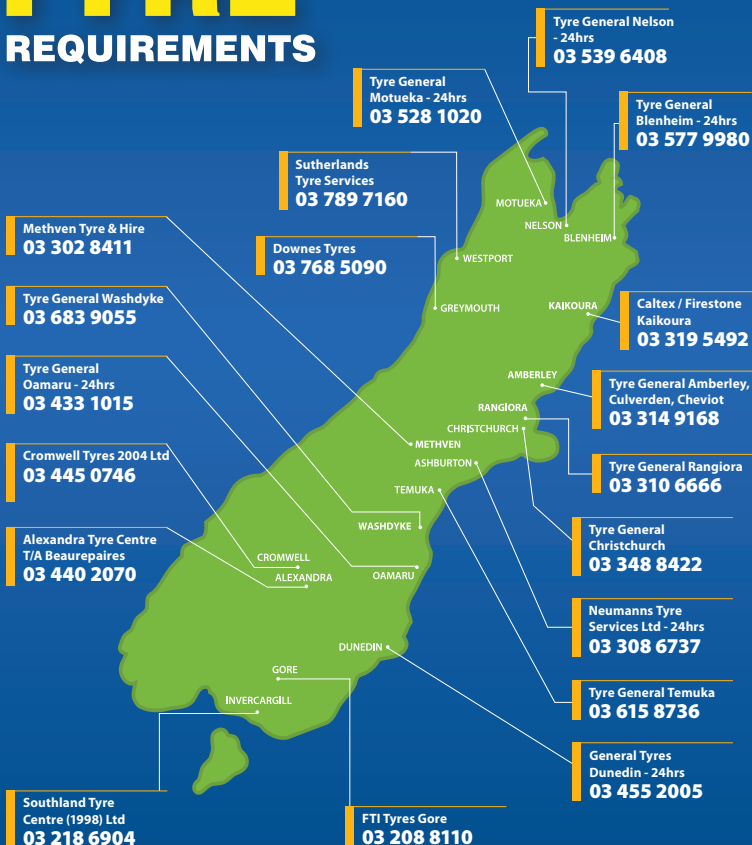
A new Act to manage these challenges also means infinite new ways environmental activists can re-interpret the law into something which suits their agenda, including shifting the economics to a truly polluter-pays model. The recent six-part series on nitrate management in The Press also makes me wonder about how open the public would be to "leave farmers to get on with farming".

The fact is, are we really prepared for the responsibilities that come with our rights? Given the option, many may prefer a council's rule on what they can and can't do so they can just get on with it, rather than have the freedom to make a choice which can come back to bite them later.

**Eva Harris,**  
Principal Environmental  
Advisor, Enviro Collective



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# Ashburton singer's rollercoaster year

ANISHA SATYA

2025 was a solid year for Molly Harrison. The Ashburton country folk singer has released a debut single, performed across the country and collected a few trophies along the way.

Harrison took out runner up in the songwriter category at the New Zealand Country Music Association (NZCMA's) Entertainer of the Year awards.

"There were eight in the section, but only two go up for the title. I was lucky to be one of them along with Jacinta [Kerepiti]."

The 16 year old followed that success with several wins at the NZ Sun City Country Music Awards.

Harrison was a finalist for the intermediate songwriting, gospel, local solo, and New Zealand song categories, and won the gospel category.

Her performance over the awards made her the overall Intermediate category winner.

"It was pretty surreal, I definitely didn't expect it; Mum and I were both in tears," she said.

"I'd been going to that competition for a few years now... I never really thought that I would win there."

Her successful run on the award circuit means she's already qualified for next year's Entertainer of the Year awards.

Awards aside, it's the performances that Harrison's enjoyed the most this year.

"I love to sing, and being up on



Molly Harrison is a published, award-winning artist at just 16 years old. PHOTOS ANISHA SATYA

stage is my happy place where I feel really comfortable.

"Also meeting new people as well; I love when I see people singing along to the songs."

She's gigged at the Mount Bar and Cafe, The Fine Lion, and even Christchurch's the Church Pub while balancing school and her multiple jobs.

Her most recent gig was a

big one – Tamar's Party in the Paddock.

"That was so cool, it was my first outdoor festival; had a few people coming up right close to the stage and singing along, and dancing."

Harrison said more and more, people outside of her Mid Canterbury bubble were starting to recognise her and her music.

"I was at the Kaylee Bell concert,

Molly Harrison says more and more people outside of her Mid Canterbury bubble were starting to recognise her and her music.



and I was just talking to Zac Griffiths who opened for her.

"A girl called Annabel came up to me - she sings at the same singing school as me, but I'd never met her."

"She came up and she said, 'Zac, can you sign my shirt? And you too Molly?'"

Harrison will round out her year with some Christmas gigs, and

then it's on to 2026.

"My main goal is to get two new singles out. And getting into more co-writing as well."

Her first major event in the new year will be the Tamworth Country Music Festival in mid-January.

You can listen to her debut single 'From the Hillside' on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Play and Amazon Music.

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# Lamb Loin Chops with Blueberry & Cardamom Relish

Recipe by Kirsten McCaffrey,  
courtesy of Beef + Lamb NZ



## Ingredients:

### Lamb

- 8 Quality Mark lamb loin chops
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

### Blueberry relish

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely sliced
- 1 cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)
- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp brown sugar
- 3 cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- Pinch of salt

## To Serve:

- Roast kūmara and coriander salad

## Method:

### 1. Marinate the lamb

Rub the lamb chops with olive oil, garlic, lemon zest, salt and pepper. Set aside to marinate for at least 15 minutes, or longer, if time allows.

### 2. Cook the lamb

Heat the BBQ or a grill plate to medium-high. Sear the lamb chops for 3–4 minutes on each side for medium-rare, or cook to your liking. Remove from heat and rest for 5 minutes, loosely covered.

### 3. Make the blueberry relish

While the lamb is resting, heat olive oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the red onion and sauté for 4–5 minutes until softened.

### 4. Add the blueberries, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, cardamom pods and a pinch of salt. Simmer for 5–7 minutes until syrupy and the berries have softened. Remove cardamom pods before serving.

### 5. Serve

Spoon the warm blueberry relish over the lamb and serve with roast kūmara and coriander salad.

### Serving suggestion:

These chops go beautifully with roast kūmara and coriander salad. Easy to make and perfect for a potluck, or bring-a-plate situation: Preheat your oven to 200°C fan bake.

Toss diced kūmara with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Spread on a baking tray and roast for 25–30 minutes until golden and tender.

Let it cool slightly, then combine in a bowl with sliced capsicum, coriander, lemon juice, and pumpkin seeds. Set aside.

## Trace elements for human health

I recently spoke to a sheep farmer who told me that his lambs were 1kg heavier than the previous year after supplementing with trace minerals. Farmers know that NZ soils are deficient in selenium and other trace minerals and the benefits of adding these for animal health and productivity. It is a pity that the human health system essentially ignores most trace elements leading to many health problems.

Minerals are critical for the health and development of every cell in our body. Insufficient trace minerals can weaken immune response and leave people feeling tired and run down. Addressing trace minerals my first step for those who are tired with no medical cause.

The major minerals are calcium, magnesium and potassium. Of these it is usually magnesium that is insufficient in many diets. Low magnesium can cause many health problems including cramp, restless legs and heart rhythm problems.



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While people often respond quickly to antioxidants and vitamins, the benefits of minerals can be significant over time. This is why any good multi-nutritional will have these minerals at the right levels and in a form our body can absorb. Over the years I have seen profound health improvements by adding a multi that is a true multi-mineral. Try a good multi mineral/vitamin and antioxidant for 3 months and see what you have been missing.

John Arts (B.Soc.Sci, Dip Tch, Adv.Dip.Nut.Med) is a nutritional medicine practitioner and founder of Abundant Health Ltd. For questions or advice contact John on 0800 423559 or email [john@abundant.co.nz](mailto:john@abundant.co.nz). Join his all new newsletter at [www.abundant.co.nz](http://www.abundant.co.nz).



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# Dating in the back blocks



Jude Gane from The Dating Coach says that while dating has never been simple, for rural New Zealanders it can feel especially stacked against you. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



**Claire Inkson**  
RURAL EDITOR

**D**ating has never been simple, but for rural New Zealanders it can feel especially stacked against you.

Distance. Long hours. Small communities. Everyone knowing your business. Add dating apps into the mix and suddenly love feels less like a romance and more like a logistics exercise.

Christchurch-based dating coach Jude Gane sees it every day.

"Everyone's single," she says. "But no one's making it work."

## App fatigue is real

Dating apps were meant to make things easier. In some ways, they did. They opened up options beyond the local pub or A&P after-party.

But something has shifted.

Globally — and in New Zealand — dating app engagement has flattened or declined, particularly among people over 35.

Local market tracking shows active users on major apps like Tinder and Bumble have dropped in recent years, even though downloads remain steady.

People are still signing up —

they're just not sticking around. Gane isn't surprised.

"Apps can be really good if they're managed well," she says. "But what's happening now is people meet someone, think they're 'quite nice', go on one or two dates — and keep swiping. They're always looking to see if there's someone better."

The result is fewer second chances and less connection.

"We're not giving people a real go anymore."

## Rural dating isn't just about geography

Yes, distance matters. But Gane says the real challenges go deeper.

She also sees rural people — particularly farmers — being misunderstood.

"Farmers are incredibly trusting. They're emotionally intelligent, they care deeply about their stock and their land — but that trust can mean they're not always as discerning as they should be."

She's seen everything from mismatched expectations to people turning up with overnight bags on a first meeting.

"That's not dating — that's someone chasing a lifestyle, not a person."

## Why rural women often have it harder

If rural dating is tricky for men, it can be harder again for women.

"Rural women are often really visible in their communities,"

Gane says. "They're well known. So the minute they start dating, it's noticed — and judged."

Add childcare, work, distance and the reality that someone usually has to move, and the stakes feel higher.

"It's not impossible," she says. "There are very good men out there. But it does take confidence."

## Confidence is key

For both men and women, much of Gane's advice comes back to confidence — and building it steadily.

"Confidence builds through action, and the more you do socially, the more confident you become."

But she also stresses the importance of emotional safety — especially for rural people who can feel isolated or under pressure to make dating work.

"Don't give too much of yourself in the beginning," she says.

"When people are lonely, they put enormous pressure on dating."

"That's when red flags get ignored. They want something so badly they stop being objective."

## How to swipe..right

Despite the fatigue, Gane doesn't tell people to ditch dating apps altogether.

"They're fine — as long as they're an add-on, not your whole dating life."

*Her non-negotiables:*

- Know what you want — and what you can realistically offer

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- Use recent, natural photos (no heavy filters, no decade-old pics)
  - Show real life, not a posed version of it
  - Don't get emotionally invested before you've met in person
- "If someone doesn't like the real you, that's okay. That's not your person."

### First dates: keep it simple

Dinner might sound romantic — but Gane isn't a fan for first meetings.

"It's a long time if you're sitting there thinking, 'Gosh, this is hard.'"

She prefers walking or coffee — low-pressure situations where conversation can flow.

And one rule she's firm on: ask the other person about themselves.

"Women leave dates saying, 'He talked about himself the whole time.' Dating isn't an interview — but it is a conversation."

### Slow it down

Gane is also upfront about one of the biggest traps she sees people fall into — especially after long relationships or periods of loneliness.

"I'm going to be a bit controversial," she says. "I think people jump into bed too early."

She's not anti-sex — but she is pro getting to know someone first.

"What happens is people start liking having sex with someone and forget about getting to know the person," Gane says. "On two or three dates, you don't actually know them."

Months later, once the novelty wears off, reality sets in.

"That's when people say, 'Oh, they're a narcissist' or 'they were

avoidant."

"Often they were just never your person — you just didn't slow down long enough to see it."

Her advice is simple: build connection before intimacy.

"Get to know how someone communicates and what their values are first."

### Honesty beats hard-to-get

Waiting days to text or trying to appear uninterested doesn't help, she says.

"If you like someone, tell them. Dating is vulnerable enough without games."

A simple message is enough: I enjoyed meeting you. I'd like to see you again.

"If they say no, that's okay. Everyone you like doesn't have to like you back."

### Her advice for rural people?

Go — to the events, the gatherings, the sports nights, the community things.

Go anyway — even when you're tired. Even when it's cold. Even when it's a 45-minute drive.

"Say yes," Gane says. "Fill your life with people and experiences. When your life feels full, a relationship becomes something you want — not something you need."

### A tip for rural men: don't do it alone

One pattern Gane sees time and again is who turns up to her Singles Mingles— social events she hosts in cities and rural towns around the country, designed to give people a chance to meet face to face, without the pressure of



dating apps.

"At my events I always have miles more women than men," she says. "Men tend to come on their own, while women arrive in twos and threes."

For rural men, she encourages bringing backup.

"Find another single mate and go together. That's confidence-

making. Women run in packs and have built-in support. Men are often more solitary — and that can make it harder."

### Dating: it's a numbers game

Not every person you meet will be "your" person. And that's okay. "Just meet people," Gane says.

"Some will become friends. Some will lead you to other people. Everything's an opportunity — especially in New Zealand."

Above all, she says, don't stop living while you wait.

"Confidence, happiness, and a full life are incredibly attractive. When you focus on that, the rest tends to follow."

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# Southern Alps, southern roots: Moa Brewing Co's new chapter



Moa Brewing co is riding the low carb wave with their Southern Alps low carb lager. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Under managing director Stephen Smith, the Moa Brewing Co has stabilised, rebuilt and begun rising quickly in a shifting beer market.



**Claire Inkson**  
RURAL EDITOR

From its home among the Marlborough vines, Moa Brewing Co is carving out a new future: one built on family ownership, South Island sourcing and a fast-growing, low-carb lager that is now challenging much larger global players.

Under Managing Director Stephen Smith, the brewery has stabilised, rebuilt and begun rising quickly in a shifting beer market, driven in large part by Southern Alps Ultra Low Carb Lager, brewed entirely from South Island-grown ingredients, including Canterbury malt and hops from Garston, the world's most southern hop farm.

Moa was initially founded by Josh Scott, son of renowned winemaker Allan Scott. After several ownership changes, Smith and his father, Mike, purchased the brewery in 2021. "We bought a very distressed business," Smith says. "We went through a rebranding effort, we've introduced a



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whole bunch of new liquids and innovation, and we've just been really focused on fixing the fundamentals of the business."

That rebuilding happened during some of the industry's toughest years.

"We've been through Covid, we've been through massive cost inflation, and we're still here and doing really well," he says. "The key to our success has been that we are focused on offering great beers and great value."

### Low-carb leads the way

With traditional craft beer flattening, the strongest growth is now in low-carb and zero-alcohol options. "There's no more growth left in craft," Smith says. "The only two parts of the market that are growing are low carb and zero."

That shift led Moa to secure the Southern Alps trademark and develop a low-carb lager that could stand apart from the international giants dominating the category.

A quiet South Island test through Foodstuffs stores delivered strong results.

"We just felt there's a role here for us with a truly New Zealand-owned, family-owned company to challenge those big internationally owned brands," Smith says.

Southern Alps is now stocked in New World, Four Square and Super Liquor and PAK'nSAVE stores right across the North Island.

Smith says many low-carb drinkers compromise on flavour — something Moa didn't accept. "People are making quite a big taste sacrifice for these low-carb beers," he says. "We worked really hard to give a bit more flavour and taste profile."

### South Island grown

Southern Alps is built on a supply chain deeply rooted in the region.

"All of our malt comes from Gladfield," Smith says. "For the hops out of Garston, this family has swung the bat hard at trying to find something that's going to work for the beautiful piece of land and the family history. We just want to do whatever we can to give them the biggest opportunity to survive and thrive."

Garston Hops, in northern Southland, is officially the world's most southern hop farm, with a growing environment that produces distinctive characteristics.

"There is actually a different taste profile because the hops have to fight a little bit harder," Smith says. "It's a really lovely story that adds layers to our brand."

Moa's own momentum has followed.

"Our business now — we've been growing at 30%, which again in this market and the environment that we've had: it's pretty amazing," he says. "When the sun's shining in our industry, it makes a huge difference to people's businesses when the barbecues come out and people start being more sociable."

### Stadium taps and the red-and-black

Southern Alps has also helped secure one of the biggest beverage partnerships in the South Island — the Venues Ōtautahi pourage agreement, covering One NZ Stadium (when it opens), Apollo Projects Stadium, Wolfbrook Arena, the Christchurch Town Hall and the Air Force Museum.



Hops are sourced from Garston Hops in northern Southland, the world's southern most hop farm. PHOTO SUPPLIED

"We feel we're privileged to be a part of that story," Smith says.

Alongside this is Moa's long-term partnership with the Crusaders, a relationship Smith says exceeded expectations.

"We didn't miss a beat," he says. "We actually sold more beer than they did in the previous year."

Moa's involvement with Canterbury Rugby also includes helping establish the Southern Alps Ultra Under-85kg grade in Christchurch.

"It's a really, really great grade of rugby," Smith says. "Fast, really high skill level... it keeps young players engaged with their clubs."

### Cider, RTDs and a lean operation

Beyond beer, Moa produces Apple and Apple Rhubarb ciders using New Zealand fruit, much of it from Hawke's Bay.

The brewery's Marlborough beer garden, reopening this month, is a popular summer spot for cider on tap.

In the RTD space, Moa is relaunching its Hey Hey range.

"If we hadn't won Venues Ōtautahi, we probably would've put the white flag up," Smith says. "But it's given it a new lease of life."

The business runs with a team of

just seven.

Ownership is split 50/50 between the Smith and Dunphy families.

"We're trying to create a legacy business for our families," Smith says. "Internally we talk about being New Zealand's favourite beer company."

With Southern Alps gaining national traction and deepening community connections across Canterbury and Marlborough, Moa Brewing Co's next chapter is shaping up to be one of its strongest yet.

Things come from not overthinking it.

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# Generate Revenue from Pre-1990 Forests

Written by Duncan Ensor, CEO of Verity NZ

*Come and talk to us at the Southern Field Days – we'll be at Site A63*



**A**cross rural New Zealand, there are thousands of hectares of native forest on private land. Many of these forests are pre-1990 and, under the current New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS) rules, are effectively invisible in the carbon economy. Landowners who have protected them for decades receive no income from them, despite the very real climate, biodiversity and water-quality benefits they provide.

## Verity NZ can change that.

Through the use of an international methodology administered under the Cercarbono registry, Verity NZ can register 'non-stable' pre-1990 native forests and generate high-integrity carbon credits from these forests, providing an alternative income stream for landowners.

Pre-1990 native forests that are 'non-stable' include forests that, under the status quo, would not continue to regenerate successfully. In many cases, ungulates and pest animals are causing serious damage in these forests, as fencing and pest control are expensive. This disturbance is preventing the natural replacement of older trees, leading to changes in forest composition or, in some cases, the collapse of these forest fragments.

Before registering a project area, an eligibility check will be completed by Verity NZ. This involves us visiting the site to make sure it meets the 'non-stable' forest criteria. This includes providing evidence that degradation is occurring, such as damage to existing trees, a lack of saplings and a lack of palatable species.

These forests have the potential to be restored and accumulate more carbon, with the right interventions (e.g., fencing and pest control), but fall outside the scope of NZ ETS simply because of the age of the forest (pre-1990).

Verity NZ's approach does not involve cutting down trees, gaming the system, or undermining national policy. It recognises something fundamentally fair: if a forest is actively removing carbon from the atmosphere, that climate service has value, regardless of the year the first seed germinated.

Internationally, voluntary carbon markets are increasingly demanding projects with real, measurable, long-term impacts. Native forest regeneration in New Zealand sits at the very top of that quality spectrum. These forests can be measured, monitored and credited in a way that meets global standards for integrity and transparency.

For landowners, this creates a new revenue stream from land that is otherwise unproductive. For catchments, it encourages permanent protection of vulnerable landscapes. For rural communities, it brings investment into fencing, pest control and local contracting.

It also rewards those who did the right thing early. Families who resisted clearing native forest, who accepted lower stocking rates in

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**Using an international methodology under the Cercarbono registry, Verity NZ can register existing native forests, allowing revenue to be generated from them.**

favour of long-term stewardship, are finally able to see that commitment recognised.

In a world where buyers are seeking high-integrity, nature-based solutions, New Zealand's native forests are uniquely valuable. By pairing them with an internationally recognised methodology such as Cercarbono, Verity NZ can ensure that value flows back to the people who have protected them.

Pre-1990 forests should not be a regulatory dead end. They should be part of New Zealand's climate future – healthy forests that generate revenue and provide essential ecosystem services.

Verity NZ operates high-integrity carbon and co-benefit projects that adhere to the 10 Core Carbon Principles, guaranteeing international compliance as dictated by the United Nations.



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