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International Rural Women's Day – Standing on Strong Shoulders

When I think of the women who shaped New Zealand's rural story, I often come back to Jane Deans.

In the 1850s she found herself widowed, with a young child and a farm to manage in a new country with the barest of resources.

Instead of retreating, she rose to the challenge.

She kept Riccarton farm running, lobbied for schools and health services, and fought to protect Riccarton Bush – a stand of native forest that still exists today because of her determination.

Jane's story resonates with me because it captures the grit and guardianship that so many rural women carry, often quietly, on their shoulders.

She didn't seek recognition, but her actions left a legacy of community and conservation that still speaks across the generations.

For me, she symbolises not just one pioneer, but the countless women – our grandmothers, mothers, and daughters – who rose before dawn to milk cows, raised families in draughty cottages, planted trees to shelter their homes, and held communities together when times were tough.

As we celebrate International Rural Women's Day on October 15, I see the same strength and resilience in the women we feature in this issue.

From North Otago farmer Jane Smith,

who isn't afraid to speak her mind on some of the biggest challenges facing our sector, to Emma Higgins, a senior analyst at Rabobank helping farmers make sense of global markets, rural women continue to lead in ways that matter.

Their voices shape not only their own businesses but the wider agricultural landscape.

And then there are women like Emma Poole, who made history as the first female winner of the FMG Young Farmer of the Year and famously spoke of "breaking the grass ceiling."

She reminds us that leadership doesn't always look the same – sometimes it's at the milking shed, sometimes in the boardroom, sometimes on a stage watched by the whole country.

For this issue, I asked our featured women to describe rural woman in three words – and their answers reflect the different strengths women bring to the agricultural table.

For me, those three words would be Resilient, adaptable and determined.

When I think of Jane Deans, and when I meet women like Jane Smith, Emma Higgins, Karen Williams and the many other women I have the privilege to highlight in our sector for Rural Guardian, I see a thread connecting them all.

It's a story of women who step forward, often in challenging circumstances, to care

for land, people, and community.

That, to me, is the true heart of rural leadership.

This International Rural Women's Day, I feel proud to be able to tell their stories in these pages – and grateful to be part of a sector where women continue to stand tall, on strong shoulders.



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Get Your Garden Ready for Spring!

Spring is coming, and that means it's time to get outside and start working in the garden! At ACL Landscaping, Morris Wotton and his team are getting ready to help everyone freshen up their yards.

The days are getting longer, and the sun is shining more. That's when lawns start to grow again, and people begin thinking about making their gardens look great. Whether you want to add bark, stones, or compost, ACL Landscaping has everything you need.

Starting Saturday, September 13, their summer hours begin. That means they'll be open Monday to Friday from 7 AM to 5 PM, and on Saturdays from 7 AM until lunchtime. Perfect for weekend gardeners!

If you're heading to the dump with rubbish, why not swing by ACL on your way back and pick up some goodies for the garden? They've got topsoil, compost, and lots of colourful stones and bark. You can even see all the different products on display right at the office.

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Morris says they've even got special compost made with natural ingredients like bark and animal manure. It's great for flower gardens or veggie patches. They also make a 50/50 mix of compost and soil for brand-new gardens or raised beds.

So, if you're getting excited about spring and want your garden to look its best, head down to ACL Landscaping. Whether you need bark, compost, or even just a few stones, they're ready to help. And remember, their new hours start September 13 just in time for a busy gardening season.

See you in the garden!

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Canterbury in a 'nitrate emergency': what does that mean?

As one of the final acts of the term, Canterbury Regional councillors declared a nitrate emergency. Few deny a problem, but some labelled the move as “meaningless” and marks a deepening a divide between town and country. LDR reporter Jonathan Leask looks at the murky issue.

JONATHAN LEASK

The declaration

In a slim margin, Environment Canterbury declared a nitrate emergency on September 17, backing a motion from outgoing councillor Vicky Southworth.

Cr Southworth said the evidence shows nitrate levels are getting worse and called on the council to take a leadership role.

The motion was to declare a nitrate emergency, take a leadership role in tackling groundwater pollution, hold a detailed workshop on its causes and impacts, and seek advice on the costs and funding options to shift the burden of nitrate treatment from water users to polluters.

Southworth's motion gained support from chairperson Craig Pauling, Greg Brynes, Iaeen Cranwell, Joe Davies, Paul Dietsche, Grant Edge, Nuk Korako, and Genevieve Robinson.

Opposed were deputy chairperson Deon Swiggs, John

Sunkell, Ian Mackenzie, Peter Scott, Nick Ward, David East and Claire McKay.

Pauling, Brynes, and Dietsche, like Southworth, are not restanding for election and won't be around to deal with the ramifications of the declaration.

In putting the motion forward, Southworth said farmers are working hard to reduce nitrate losses but “collectively it's not nearly enough”, and there “just has to be less [sic] cows”.

Those who pushed back said the declaration was “virtue signalling” and an attack farmers, who were working to reduce nitrate levels.

What next?

Pauling said initially “the council will carry out the actions agreed to as outlined in the Notice of Motion”.

As it was made at the final meeting of the term, the incoming council will walk into a nitrate emergency.

Pauling is urging the new council, and other groups, “to

Environment Canterbury Councillor Vicky Southworth put forward the motion to declare a nitrate emergency in Canterbury. RNZ/NATE MCKINNON



prioritise these conversations, and to get around the table to consider options to address the issue”.

“This isn't an issue that can be resolved by one agency or group of people alone, and anyone who thinks otherwise needs to have a closer look into the complexity and history of this issue.

“We won't solve this by fighting over whose fault it is, we will solve it by coming together to find a way through. We all owe that to our communities and our environment.”

The declaration does not commit ECan to any new expenditure he said.

“The incoming council will need to determine the next steps in addressing this issue, and how potential solutions will be funded.”

The declaration was not an admission ECan has failed address the nitrate issues he said.

“It's not a fair judgement to say that Canterbury Regional Council is solely responsible for the level of nitrate in our groundwater.

“At the end of the day, we have a problem to solve, and it is going to take everyone working together to

do that – and by everyone, I mean industry - farming and irrigation schemes, mana whenua, the community, and all the statutory agencies.”

Pauling said it “isn't about how many cows are in Canterbury”.

“It's about finding ways to reduce increasing nitrate trends in groundwater and ensure drinking water sources are better protected.

“We know agricultural intensification is a major source of increasing nitrate concentrations in much of Canterbury's groundwater. But cows are not the only source.

“Stormwater and wastewater from urban sources are also important to manage.”

Efforts ignored

Cr Mackenzie felt the declaration wasn't about science but “misinformation and alarmism”.

He said the cause of a lot of the high nitrate levels are legacy issues, from previous bad land use practice, but landowners “are heavily involved in implementing practises to reduce these levels”.

The nitrate reduction policies

that have been place over the last decade are showing signs that “the groundwater nitrate levels may have peaked and might be showing data to suggest a decline”.

After the meeting, Cr Sunkell said ECan's mandated catchment interventions “have been deemed ineffective before they are given a chance”.

He fears the decision “will only exacerbate the demise of this and other regional councils”, pointing to the Government's murmuring about the future for regional councils in the RMA reform.

Government disapproval

Government ministers have slammed ECan's declaration as the latest example of why RMA reform is necessary.

South Island Minister and Rangitata MP James Meager said the only thing ECan achieved declaring a nitrate emergency “is to further question what role regional councils will have to play under the new resource management system”.

“The declaration does nothing to improve water quality and is completely meaningless.

“This will drive further division between town and country and undermine decades of progress made by farmers.

“Our RMA reform will put a halt to this clearly anti-farmer and anti-growth sentiment and bring a more balanced approach to farming and our environment.”

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Ashburton floods spark climate adaptation study



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

When PhD scholar Sara Rauf first arrived in New Zealand from Pakistan in 2017, she and her husband settled in Ashburton while he completed his doctorate at Lincoln University.

During that time, Rauf discovered both the warmth of rural communities and the challenges farmers face when nature turns severe.

One event in particular left its mark: the 2021 Ashburton floods. "I remember walking along the river when it was right up to the edge. There were fears the bridge might collapse. Seeing the scale of that flood really struck me," Rauf recalls. "It made me think deeply about how farmers were coping with extreme events like that, and what it meant for their future."

That moment helped shape the direction of Rauf's own doctoral research.

Now based in Sydney with her

young family, she is studying how New Zealand dairy farmers are adapting to climate change.

Her focus is on practical changes farmers are making - or thinking about making - to build resilience against increasing floods, droughts, and storms.

A survey for farmers

To capture those insights, Rauf has launched a nationwide online survey, with a focus on the dairy sector.

It takes just 10-15 minutes to complete and asks about the strategies dairy farmers have tried, the challenges they've faced, and their views on climate risks.

"The aim is to understand farmers' capacity to adapt: their knowledge, resources, and willingness to make changes," Rauf explains.

"That information can help shape policy, training, and support programmes so they actually meet farmers' real needs."

The survey is entirely anonymous and has been approved by Lincoln University's Human Ethics Committee.

Farmers can choose to leave their email at the end if they want to be contacted later, but that is optional.

Supporting rural communities

In addition to contributing to important research, every completed survey also helps the wider farming community.

For each response, \$10 will be donated to the Rural Support Trust, which provides vital support to farmers and their families during tough times.

"This way, farmers know their time not only helps research, but also directly supports their own community," Rauf says.

Call to action

Rauf hopes to gather at least 200 responses before the survey closes in December.

So far, around 25 farmers have taken part, and she's urging more to add their voices.

"Farmers are incredibly busy, I understand that," she says.

"But just a few minutes can make a real difference. This research is about ensuring that farmers' experiences and opinions shape the support they receive in the future."

The survey can be accessed via a simple link or QR code, available on the Rural Support Trust website and through Lincoln University channels.



Sara Rauf's experiences of the 2021 Ashburton floods have shaped her PHD research.

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FARMER SURVEY: HAVE YOUR SAY

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And now's the perfect time for South Island farmers to start making it a reality, says leading pasture expert Graham Kerr, Barenbrug.

"Spring pasture renewal is a great way to improve and strengthen your farm business. And thanks to this study, for the first time we now have data available which reveal exactly how

much this can be worth to you in both profitability, and emissions intensity.

"If that's not a golden opportunity to set yourself up for the future with what grass you pick for spring renewal, I don't know what is!"

He urges farmers to explore all ryegrass seed options available before they renew this season, rather than opt for the status quo, or whatever cultivar their rep suggests.

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The exciting thing for farmers is that Array really stands out when there's a nitrogen deficiency, Graham says.

This is a real benefit during periods of low soil nitrogen, for example after periods of heavy rain, or leading into a hot or dry spell, when the organic matter cycle slows down and nitrogen levels drop.

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currently available.

"The industry study has proved that cutting greenhouse gas emissions doesn't reduce dairy farm profitability. The next step for many farmers will be working out how best to implement these findings on their own properties, if they haven't already.

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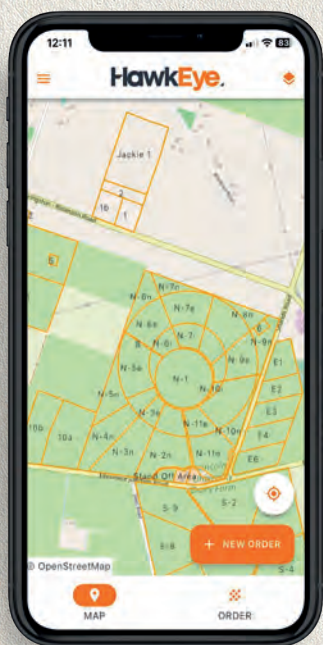
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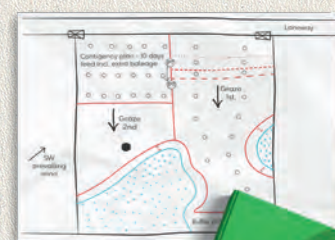
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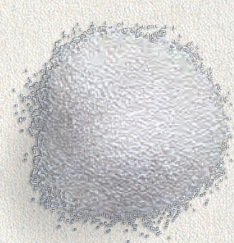
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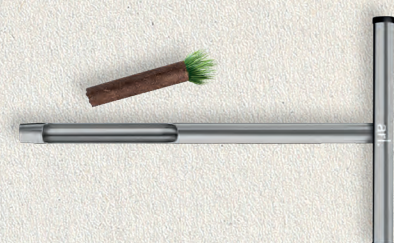
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'Low-down nasty bullying': Arable farmer David Clark speaks out on ECan's consent process



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Mid Canterbury arable farmer David Clark has accused Environment Canterbury (ECan) of a "bullying" approach to farm consents, saying the process threatens not only his family's future but also the viability of cropping across the region.

Clark and his wife Jayne recently returned from Europe to find a seven-page letter from ECan requesting further information on their Farming Land Use Consent application. Their mixed arable, seed and livestock farm near Ashburton has held a consent since 2017 and was awarded an A-grade environmental audit in 2024.

What should have been a routine renewal has become what Clark calls an "overwhelming" ordeal.

"It was just an overwhelming request for minute detail that trolled through the application and Overseer to a ridiculous level, including going back and re-litigating the baseline from 2009 to 2013," he said.

On social media, he was blunter: "I shudder to think how many countless hours are going to [be] charged to us by ECan for them to dissect our Overseer and Farm Environment Plan line by line in minute, pointless detail."

ECan consents planning manager Henry Winchester said there is no such thing as a "consent renewal" under the Resource Management Act (RMA).

"Every application to undertake an activity requiring consent must be processed in accordance with the processes in the RMA. Applications, even for existing activities, must be considered against the current state of the environment and relevant legislation."



Mid Canterbury arable farmer David Clark has described ECan's approach to the consent process as "bullying" and says he has been "inundated" with messages from farmers in a similar situation.

PHOTO ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

Clark says that stance is deeply concerning.

"It's a real worry to hear ECan suggest there's no such thing as a renewal and that every consent is treated as a new activity," he said.

"That doesn't give any assurance to us as farmers, given the long-term investments we've made in our properties. If we're going to be farming from short-term consent to short-term consent, relying on the goodwill of ECan, that's not a sustainable future."

The Clarks' property is one land title but is split between two nutrient management zones: the Ashburton River Zone (Plan Change 5) and the Lower Hinds Zone (Plan Change 2).

"The farm is one land title, one block, but it falls under two separate sets of rules," Clark said. "We went to them and said, let's just consent it as one, observing the more stringent rules, but they said no. That makes it very hard for crop rotations to work across the whole farm. It's for no gain, other than an imaginary line on a map."

Overseer, the computer model used to estimate nutrient losses, is also central to the dispute.

"Overseer was never designed to line up two farm systems against each other," Clark said. "It's relatively accurate for pastoral farms like dairy, but in arable it tends to produce absolute numbers that are much higher and arguably wrong."

In his Facebook post he added that the easiest way to get consent would be to "withdraw our current application and lodge a consent application for conversion to dairying. This is because Overseer gives lower results to dairying, and loud and noisy results to arable."

Clark described ECan's approach as "bullying."

"The most confronting part was the bullying," he said. "They said: 'You have 15 working days. If you don't comply, we will notify you, call for public submissions, hold a hearing, and we may decline your consent.' Honestly, it's bullying. Nothing more than low-down nasty bullying."

ECan rejected the suggestion.

"We process consent applications in accordance with the requirements of the RMA," Winchester said. "The RMA imposes specific requirements

on councils related to requests for further information, including the requirement for us to publicly notify an application if a response is not received within 15 working days, unless an extension is requested."

For Clark, the uncertainty has real consequences.

"It doesn't give you any confidence to reinvest. We simply cancelled all plant replacements for the winter and said, well, we don't know where this is heading, so let's not spend money we don't have to. That impacts the community too."

On September 24, Clark hosted ACT leader David Seymour and Associate minister for agriculture Andrew Hoggard on the farm to discuss the issue.

"We had some very good discussions around consent continuity, the urgent need to replace the Resource Management Act, and ultimately the place of regional councils in this space," he said.

Clark says his experience reflects a wider problem.

"It's struck a chord because so many people are either facing this

now or it's just over the horizon for them," he said. "This is not about David Clark or the Clark family or Valletta Farm. This is about a systemic breakdown within the consenting process at ECan and other regional councils."

He also believes external pressure is shaping ECan's approach.

"I'm aware Greenpeace has threatened to take judicial reviews on every consent ECan issues. I think that's playing out in the background of all this."

Winchester said he was not aware of any pressure from Greenpeace.

"If it were true, it would not influence our approach, because all consent applications, even for existing activities, must be considered against the current state of the environment and current legislation."

Clark says the solution is straightforward.

"We need a clear set of regional and zone rules. Then we operate as a permitted activity with a Farm Environment Plan and just get on with it. We need to move away from this adversarial consenting process."

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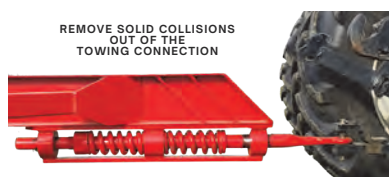
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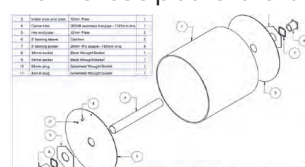


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Common Good or Tragedy for All?

EVA HARRIS

I woke recently in a pool of sweat, heart racing. Too much coffee? Or maybe just a hot flush? Then I remembered the nightmare — the dreaded Group Project.

You know the type: random people thrown together to solve a problem. One person takes over (The Bossy One), another quietly does as they're told (Quiet Worker), and someone else does as little as possible (The Layabout). The result? A stressed-out Bossy One, a resentful Quiet Worker, and a Layabout who gets a free ride — with everyone ending up with a mediocre grade.

The truth is, group projects aren't just school memories. They're how real life works when we're asked to collaborate. People naturally lean toward their own goals and agendas. Instead of "working together," it can easily slip into "how can I get others to work for me?"

History even has a name for this: The Tragedy of the Commons. It's what happens when individuals

take more than their fair share from a common resource, until eventually there's nothing left for anyone.

Take nitrate pollution in our groundwater. It didn't happen overnight. It's the result of thousands of small decisions, year after year, each adding just a bit more nitrogen into the system. Fixing it will take just as many people, over many years, doing their bit to put things right. If only a few take action, we'll get the same old mediocre results.

So the real challenge is: how do we get everyone on board? How do we bring people with different values and goals together? How do we manage our resources fairly, for today and tomorrow in a way that can benefit us all?

There's no quick fix. Rules will always be needed for those who won't act, but the best solutions come from honest conversations. Finding common ground. Choosing to engage, not just enforce.

That's why Environment Canterbury's recent declaration

of a "Nitrate Emergency" feels unhelpful. It shuts down conversation instead of encouraging it — more like the tactics of Greenpeace or the Environmental Law Society than of a public agency meant to bring people together to fix the problem.

If the Councillors calling for an emergency were serious about improving water quality, they need to open the door and invite those in who need to do the work and figure out what's missing to make it happen.

What we need now is leadership, not division. Leadership that inspires. Leadership that brings out the best in people, creates safe spaces for tough discussions, and helps us find shared solutions. Posturing and political point-scoring only push people to look after themselves and ignore the bigger picture. And if that happens, the "commons" will suffer — and so will we all.

Eva Harris is principal environmental advisor for Enviro Collective



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EuroAgri

The Farmers Fast Five: where we ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture and what farming means to them. Today we talk to high school student and Hurunui farmer Pieta Sidey.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I am a sixth-generation Corriedale sheep stud breeder, and it's safe to say a lot of my passion comes from my grandfather, Doc.

My dad and grandfather would probably say I'm very particular about my sheep, and if I don't like something about a sheep, whether it be my sheep or my dad's, I am very quick to say something about it, which they sometimes like and sometimes don't.

But that's why it's good that there are three of us, so if two of us don't agree, the other person can have the deciding vote. I think it's safe to say I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if it weren't for my Grandfather, Doc Sidey, and my Dad, Andy Sidey. I owe them everything.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

We are based in Hawarden, North Canterbury. We farm Corriedales, Poll Dorsets and our composite sheep, which are half Corriedale, quarter Texel, quarter Poll Dorset. We also have Herefords, which are mainly on the hill country. Our farm, Glenovis, has been in our family for just over 103 years now. We farm on approximately 720 hectares, about 300 of those hectares are native hill country, and the rest are cultivated.

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

A difficult challenge would have to be last year's drought; we managed to get through it by having plenty of hay on hand and not being overstocked.

4 What has been a major highlight for you in your farming journey?

I have several favourite memories, the first one being at the Christchurch show in 2023 with my ewe, Harriet. She got that name because she had won my great-grandfather, Harry Sidey's, memorial trophy. The set of twins she had at foot that year at the show will both be going to this year's Christchurch show. Her daughter Henrietta has a great set of twins at foot, as a two-tooth, and her son Henry will also be attending.



My other favourite memory would have to be at this year's Hawarden A and P show when I won the supreme champion sheep of the show with my ram Ceasar, which was very unexpected. I remember standing in the judging pen with my grandfather, Doc, and hearing my name announced over the microphone. I said to him, 'Did I just win?' He said yes, and I replied, 'No, I didn't.' He said, 'Go get your ribbon.' You could not wipe that smile off my face.

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

As always, if you're gonna be a dreamer, you better be a doer. Farming is hard work with no days off; the sheep and cattle still need to be fed out in snow, storms, and droughts. Farming's tough, life's tough, but you have to get over it and cowgirl up because tomorrow doesn't care if you found today hard. After all, the sun is always going to rise again.

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Turning data into decisions at Lone Star Farms

With 14 staff and 32,000 stock units across 6,000 hectares, Carey Pawson-Edwards doesn't have time for clunky admin. That's why the FarmIQ integration with his Gallagher weighing system works so well, giving Carey the confidence and control to manage his animals with greater insights than ever before.

Carey is stock manager at Lone Star Farms' Caberfeidh Station wintering sheep and beef in North Otago, finishing up to 31,000 lambs and 1,000 cattle a year.

With its sights set high, Lone Star Farms has an ambitious goal: 70% of its production going into premium, value-added markets like Lumina Lamb, Handpicked Cattle, and Angus Pure. This requires good stockmanship and relies on traceability, accurate data, to demonstrate performance from paddock to plate.

"Premium markets are demanding," Carey explains. "It's not just about turning out an animal, you've got to have the data. EID tags, liveweights, condition scores — all of that information proves the integrity of our product and unlocks extra value."

Before Gallagher's FarmIQ integration, managing data across multiple systems meant duplication of effort and a lot of manual work.

"Now it couldn't be easier," Carey says, who uses the Gallagher TWR-5 with 5000kg heavy duty wireless load bars. "You log in, connect, and the integration is live. Every weighing session uploads to Gallagher's cloud-based

Animal Performance software, and within five to ten minutes, it's in FarmIQ."

Cary explains that making decisions under pressure is much easier with good data at your fingertips, such as during the 2024 drought, when pasture covers dropped rapidly, feed was tight, and the market volatile. "Because we had the data right there, things like liveweights, feed budgets, even market prices, we could make a call straight away. We shifted stock before prices fell further."

With so many staff, a shared system makes coordination smoother. "The whole team can see where things are at. We're not relying on scraps of paper or someone's memory. Everyone is working off the same information, and that helps us stay aligned."

It also boosts communication with Lone Star's wider network and reporting to company managers, suppliers, and market partners. "Numbers build trust."

Looking to the future, Carey sees potential for even more connectedness across systems.

"Whether it's data flowing back into Gallagher Animal Performance, or linking in with other platforms, every step that reduces duplication and brings data together adds value for us as farmers."

When asked what he'd say to other farmers considering the integration, Carey's advice: "Don't overthink it. It's two minutes to set up, then you forget about it. The data flows automatically, it saves you time, and it helps you make better calls. Honestly, it's a no-brainer."







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Tania Svennson

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

We farm in Hawarden North Canterbury.
We are mainly beef farmers with a few sheep running around.

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

I drive a 2009 Suzuki Jimny.
She is not quite a ute but she gets me around the farm.

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

With 4wd she can go most places and as light as a feather, so light that when she decides to not start some days, I can push her and quickly jump in and push-start her all on my own.

Her light brown colour suits the farm as it blends into all the dirt that covers the car, so she doesn't look as dirty.

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

I listen to a bit of Missy Elliot, Doja cat... the cows love that music as I drive into a paddock and have The Rock playing most of the time.

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

Me and my trusty Jimny love stopping for a coffee when we are on the road.

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

I always have my trusty helper Molly the labrador by my side.

The front part of the car holds all my girly items such as lip gloss and a hair tie for emergency.

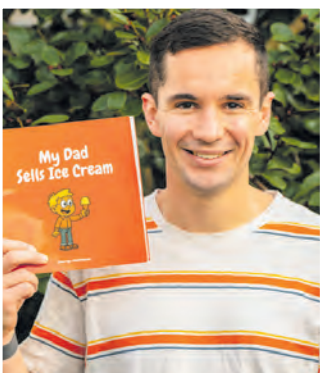
Crystals around my gear stick for good vibes and a Chanel perfume for smelly times.

I always have some hand moisturizer for when I get a minute to take care of my dry hands.

Then the back has electric fence posts, dog biscuits, gardening tools and wet weather gear.



Ice Cream dreams and paddock scenes



George McDonald's Mid Canterbury upbringing shaped his respect for agriculture and the food supply chain.

George McDonald's mission to show kids where their food comes from

CLAIRE INKSON

George McDonald is turning cows, ice cream, and lunchboxes into lively rhymes, using children's books to reconnect kids with the story of their food.

Raised on a farm on Thompsons Track near the Ashburton River, McDonald says his rural upbringing shaped his respect for agriculture.

"Technically I'm a farm boy, but I wouldn't call myself a farmer. I never intended to work in agriculture, but I realised if you want real purpose in your work, producing food is about as good as it gets."



George's children were perfect test subjects for his books. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Although his career hasn't been on the farm, McDonald has always worked close to the food chain - first with Fonterra and Dairyworks, and now as brand and channel manager at Ravensdown.

The distance from the paddock gave him perspective.

"You don't always appreciate what you've got until you leave. At uni and later in Auckland I realised how lucky we are. With kids, you don't need zoos, you just drive 15 minutes and see real animals in paddocks. I wanted to pass that sense of connection on."

Books born at the breakfast table

McDonald's inspiration came from home.

"I've got two young boys under

three. My eldest, Finn, turns three in October and his favourite things are cows, horses, and ice cream. When we tell him he's going to Nana and Poppa's farm he lights up and asks every day when the weekend is.

"I thought — my kids love books, I love books, so why not use my creative skills to put something together?"

Not content just to write, McDonald illustrated the books himself, teaching himself Adobe Illustrator along the way.

His debut, *My Dad Sells Ice Cream*, launched the *Little Farmer* series by tapping into a childhood favourite food.

"Finn loves Hokey Pokey ice cream. We bribe him with it for everything from eating dinner

to potty training. Seeing his excitement made me realise there was a story.

"I wanted something fun and entertaining but still educational. And who doesn't love ice cream? It keeps a bit of kid magic in the mix."

Lunchboxes and lessons

The second book, *My Lunch Comes from the Store*, widened the scope from dairy to the whole lunchbox: bread, yoghurt, apples - and chips.

"Kids love treats. I didn't want it to be preachy. Kids do eat chips and biscuits. It's about being real while showing where food comes from."

The rhyming, playful style takes cues from childhood classics.

"Kids' books should be fun and full of exaggeration. For example, in one book the child says his lunch is 'yuck', because that's how kids really talk."

While the books avoid being overly moralistic, McDonald hopes they quietly educate both children and adults.

"In Auckland I noticed how disconnected people are.

"Many don't understand where milk or butter comes from, they just complain about the price."

Tested on tough critics

Feedback at home has been both heart-warming and brutally honest.

"My youngest, Cooper, only lets us read two books: *Where Is the Green Sheep?* and mine. He toddles over to his grandad with the book saying 'ice-cream, ice-cream.' That melted his heart, and mine."

His wife keeps him on track:

"My wife is brilliant. She'll say, 'kids don't talk like that.' I also leaned on rural professionals to check details, like how potatoes are grown."

McDonald admits the hardest part was knowing when to stop editing.

"The challenge was being my own worst critic. I wanted to take the illustrations up a level, add more detail, strengthen the rhymes. Knowing when to stop is hard. Hitting 'send to print' is nerve-wracking because you can always tweak more, and everyone has an opinion."

Looking ahead

McDonald hopes the *Little Farmer* series will grow across other sectors, including sheep and beef.

"The goal is to expand across more parts of the farm. The sheep and beef story is harder to tell in a family-friendly way, but I'll keep working on it. Right now, I'm focused on spreading the message — getting books into daycares, schools, preschools. They don't educate anyone if they're sitting in my garage."

For now, the books are self-published and available at www.littlefarmers.co.nz, but McDonald has bigger ambitions — and hopes to land a book deal to increase his reach.

"Farmers appreciate them straight away, but if these reach urban schools it would be huge. I've slipped in little facts, like cows having four stomachs and eating grass and clover. If a child or parent learns something new, that's a win."

14 YOUNG COUNTRY

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Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmers Club member. Today we talk to Tony Munford.

1 What is the name of your club, and how long have you been a member?
Bay of Islands club, and I have been a member for 2 years.

2 What has been the highlight for you of joining Young Farmers? What are the benefits and experiences that you feel have helped you most?

The highlight from joining Young Farmers has been bringing up the club from a two man team to a total of 16 members in two years, with heaps of fun with the team all round. I have been able to get lots of connections all around, and have gained some experience in what happens in competitions and better understanding of judging stock.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?
Through my father Shane, who I've helped in dairy sheds and beef farms growing up, and with his Southdown stud rams which he has been breeding for the last five-six years.

4 What is your job now?
Currently I'm studying Environmental management level 6 at NorthTec Whangarei, and have been working at GSL Surveys Whangarei part time as an assistant/field worker.

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?

I feel like in the future agriculture equipment will advance by a large margin as well as safety equipment - though I would like to see that the basics of farming and agriculture would stay fairly similar to now.

6 What are your future plans?
I would like to work in the environmental side of what I've been studying either with native animals or alongside marine work. I have been leading along the side of coming back into the farming industry either with beef, or taking over my father's Southdown stud breeding.

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

My grandfather and my father have been my biggest inspiration. They have been in agriculture for as long as I can remember. They've shown me what it's like to work with stock and how to judge the meat breeds for cattle and sheep.



WHAT HIS CLUB HAS TO SAY ABOUT TONY

Tony is a great guy with a big heart. Our BOI Young Farmers Club was about to be shut down in 2024 due to him being the only member and he's successfully brought up the numbers to 15 paid members and growing. Tony is very invested in the club and brings ideas to life in support of the club and community. Overall he's deserving of a shout out.



HUGH JACKSON, WINNER OF FMG YOUNG FARMER OF THE YEAR 2025.

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Celebrating Our Working Dog Photo Competition Winners

The Rural Guardian, in partnership with Mighty Mix Dog Food, is delighted to announce the winners of the Mighty Mix Working Dog Photo Competition. Over the past few weeks, entries poured in from across the country, showcasing the grit, beauty and character of the dogs who are at the heart of farming life. From loyal companions to tireless workers, the photos captured the spirit of rural New Zealand in

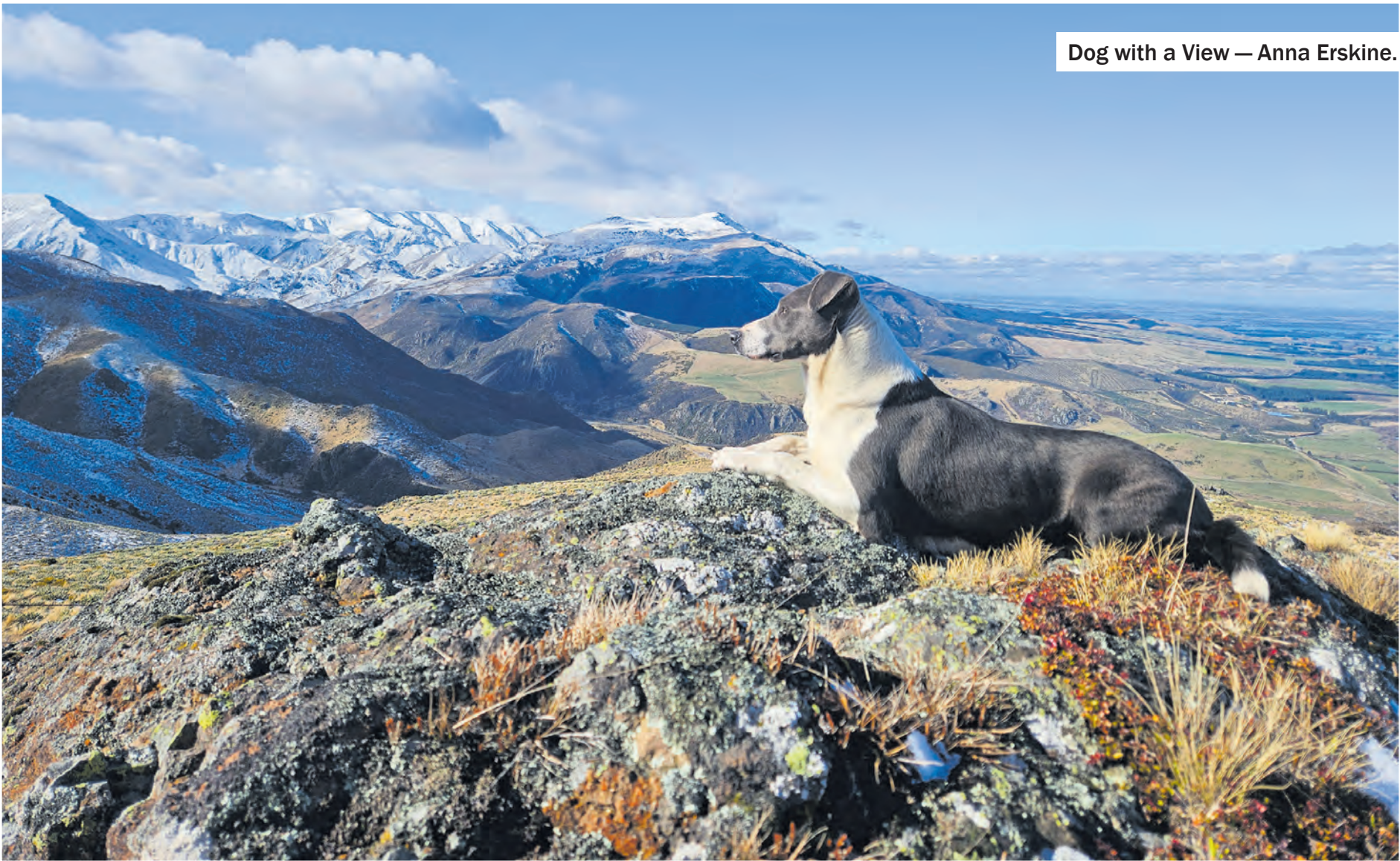
every frame. *After much enthusiasm from the public and careful judging, the winners are:*

- People's Choice Award — Andrew Mason
- Dog with a View — Anna Erskine
- Dog Portrait — Anna Munro

We will be in touch with each of the winners to arrange their prizes, generously supported by Mighty Mix Dog Food. A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone

who entered, shared their stories, and voted for their favourites. Your support made this competition a true celebration of the working dogs that keep our rural communities moving. Special thanks also to Mighty Mix General Manager, Grant Day, who took on the tough task of judging this year's entries. With so many outstanding photographs, his job was anything but easy, and we are grateful for the

time and care he brought to the process. The Rural Guardian also extends its thanks to Mighty Mix Dog Food for their backing and enthusiasm in helping us shine a light on the vital role of working dogs. Keep an eye on future editions — another exciting competition is just around the corner. In the meantime, make sure you follow us on Facebook to stay up to date with rural news, community stories, and upcoming events.



Dog with a View — Anna Erskine.



Dog Portrait – Anna Munro.



People's Choice Award – Andrew Mason.



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Andrew Mason



Andrew Mason



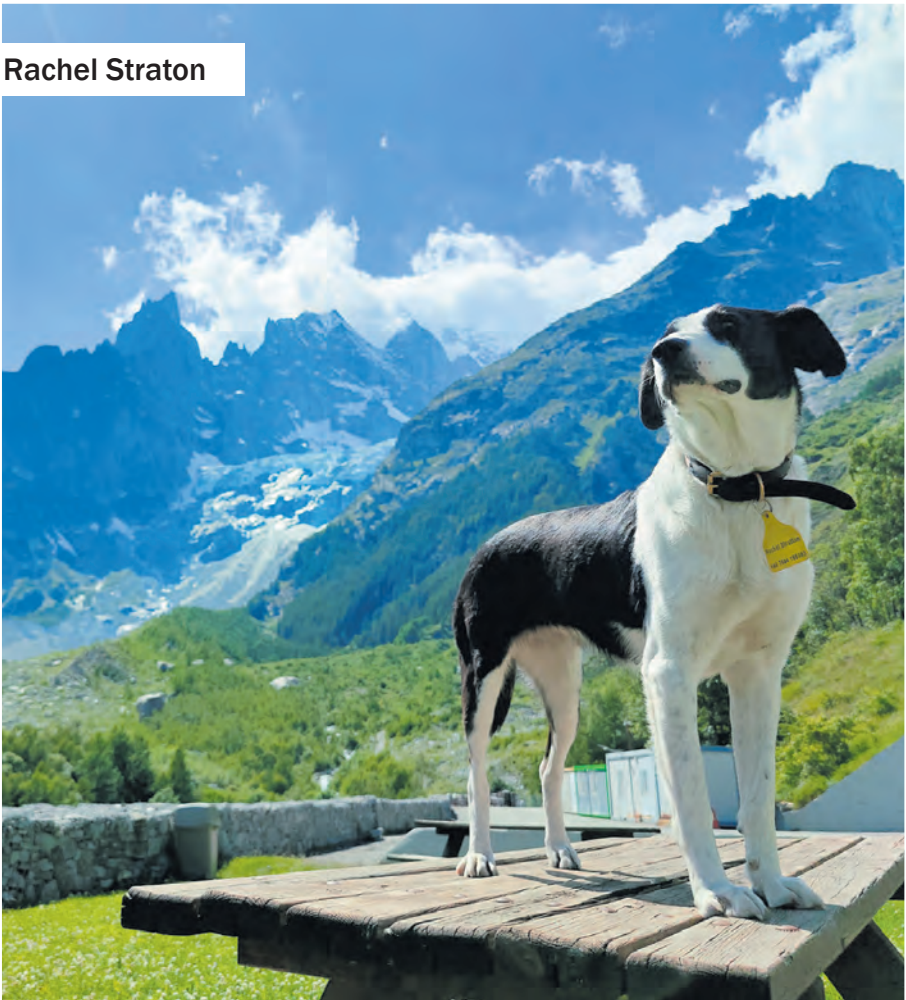
Andrew Mason



Catherine Greer



Elspeth Millar



Rachel Straton



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Hannah Vallance



Kate Perry



Georgina Archibold

SPONSORED CONTENT



South Island Country Pub of the Year – People’s Choice



We’re on the hunt for the best country pub in the South Island – and we want you to help us celebrate the places that bring our rural communities together. Whether it’s the go-to spot for a hearty meal after a long day, the local watering hole where everyone knows your name, or a hidden gem tucked away on a country road, we want to know which pub deserves the title.

Thanks to Service Foods, a locally owned food distribution company supporting New Zealand’s hospitality industry, there are great prizes up for grabs. The winning pub will receive a \$500 Service Foods credit, and one lucky voter will win a \$100 food hamper.

Stage One: Nominations open Friday 26 September and run for one week.

Stage Two: The top 20 pubs with the most nominations will go head-to-head in the final voting round. Voting will close on 20 October, when we’ll announce the winner.

Head to our Facebook page to nominate your favourite and give your local the recognition it deserves.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SERVICE FOODS SOUTH ISLAND COUNTRY PUB OF THE YEAR



Rural Guardian is proud to bring you the South Island Country Pub of the Year! Nominations are now open – head to our Facebook page to nominate your favourite pub and give them a shot at winning a \$500 Service Foods credit. One lucky voter will also win a \$100 food hamper.



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nominate your local



Crowning success:

The Kings' rise in Canterbury dairying



Allie King knew nothing about farming when she entered the dairy industry with husband Ben in Ashburton in 2015.



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Canterbury dairy farmers Ben and Allie King credit their success to setting goals — and sticking to them.

"We decided within three years we'd be contract milkers and then 50/50," Allie says. "That focus got us here. It's a tough industry at times, but it's also incredibly rewarding."

The Kings now farm in Rotherham, North Canterbury, where they relocated from Ashburton in 2022 for the second time.

Their dairying journey began in Fairton, Mid Canterbury, in 2015 after a major career pivot.

At the time, Allie was working as a customs officer at Christchurch International Airport and Ben was a livestock agent for PGG Wrightson.

"I knew nothing about farming," Allie recalls. "Within nine months

Ben moved to Ashburton, and I followed."

That move marked the start of a new chapter, but one that required sacrifices.

Climbing the ladder

"We had just bought a nice house when Ben said, 'I think I might go farming.' I didn't realise that meant moving out of our house and onto a farm," Allie laughs.

She took a job at Stocker Dairy Solutions, where she gained an early grounding in dairying, while Ben started as a farm assistant.

It didn't take long for him to climb the ladder.

"Within weeks the 2IC left, and I had to step up," Ben explains. "The farm owner had three sheds, and eventually I was unit manager and working between them all. It was a big jump, but I learned a lot."

After several moves - including a stint in Culverden managing 600 cows — the couple returned to Ashburton as contract milkers, then progressed to variable order sharemilking. Determined to build equity, they sold their house to invest in stock.

"We bought 64 calves and 30 heifers, the best we could afford," Ben says. "That was the start of growing our herd."

Their persistence paid off.

In 2022, Ben cold-called North Canterbury farmer Berry Neppelenbroek about a potential 50/50 sharemilking role on a farm he had purchased with his wife, Rachel.

"He hadn't even advertised, but I took a shot," Ben says. "A week later, he offered us the job."

Moving back to move forward

The couple admit they were hesitant to return to Culverden.

"The first time we lived here, it was incredibly isolating. I swore black and blue I'd never come back," Allie says.

"To be honest, it was tough. It's a small town, and we felt isolated. We didn't have friends there the first time, and socially it was hard. That's the reality of moving farms, you don't always fit straight in."

But the chance to achieve their 50/50 goal, combined with now having friends nearby and their young son Lincoln, changed her perspective.

Allie also credits Dairy Women's Network for making the move easier.

"That gave me a community," she says. "That made all the difference."



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- Kate Mackersey,
Massey University Vet Student

"It was a great experience and well worth the time to gain a new perspective and understanding on lameness. It really opened up my view of lameness as a whole, what can cause it and management strategies around it."
- Jack Bailey, Bankside



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Today the Kings milk 590 cows on 170 effective hectares, aiming for 660 peak this season.

“Our goal is 363,000 milk solids — about 550 per cow,” Ben says.

The farm owners invested heavily in pasture renewal, irrigation upgrades, in-shed feeding, and automation, with Ben and Allie investing in AllFlex collars.

The improvements have paid off: they’ve twice won the North Canterbury Vet Centre’s Dairy Reproduction Excellence Award for six-week in-calf rates above 80%.

The Jersey difference

Jersey cows are at the heart of the Kings’ system.

“Our farm is wet and heavy, and big Friesians would just make more damage,” Ben says. “The Jerseys forage better, graze harder, and suit the land.”

Skepticism around Jerseys in Canterbury remains, but the Kings’ results are hard to ignore.

“Our Jerseys have outperformed crossbreds here,” Ben says. “Last season we did 559 kgMS per cow, and the Jerseys are totally outperforming on efficiency.”

Today, around 65% of the herd is Jersey, with a long-term goal of becoming pure Jersey. The system also generates income from surplus heifers and Jersey bulls, reducing the number of bobby calves.

People and work ethic

For Ben, success comes down to “hard work and good people.”

Their long-term staff, Justine Adrejilo and Armando Talampas, have been with them for years, joining more through word of mouth than advertising.

The Kings also place a strong focus on staff wellbeing.

“We’ve always run a five-two roster. When I started out farming,

Jersey cows are at the heart of the Kings farming system.



I did 110-hour weeks, but that’s not sustainable. Our guys would be lucky to do half that now,” Ben says.

Calf rearing

Allie has taken charge of calf rearing - although she recently scaled back during pregnancy.

“Ben picks up calves three or four times a day to check both cow and calf health. Every calf gets colostrum within six to eight hours,” she says.

They use Optiguard mineral powder and introduce meal early to support rumen development. Losses are minimal: last season, just one calf out of more than 200 died in the pens.

Mental health and balance

Both acknowledge the mental toll of farming.

Allie has been open about living with anxiety and depression.

“I’m more aware of what I need to do to keep that dark dog away. For me, Dairy Women’s Network has been huge. It gave me community, confidence, and connection.”

Ben takes a different approach.

“Nothing will break me. I compartmentalise problems. At the end of the day, it’s just work or money. What matters is family.”

Together, they make time for small rituals like daily coffee at the local Red Post café.

“Quality time doesn’t have to be far from the farm,” Allie says. “We’ve got 170 hectares of beautiful landscape.”

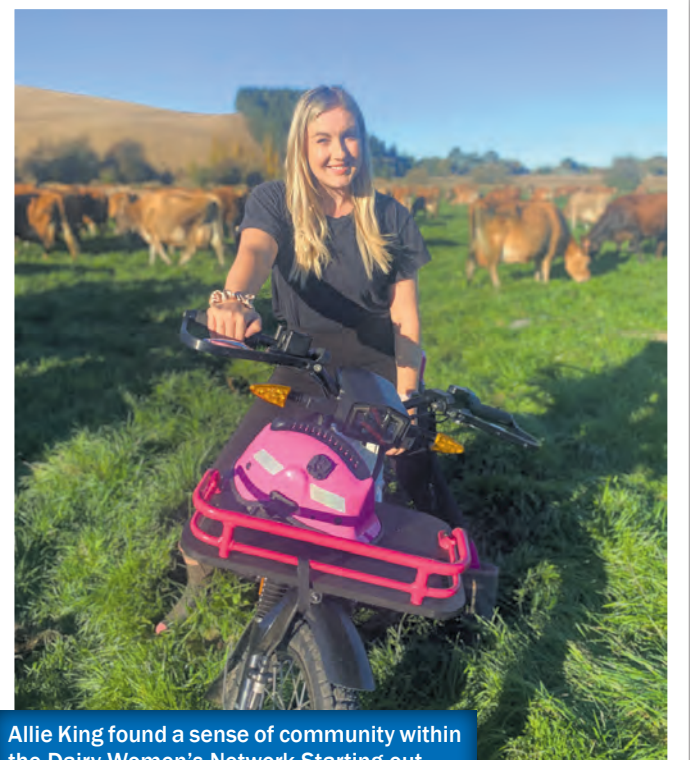
Advice for young farmers

Their advice to the next generation is clear: work hard, seize opportunities, and don’t shy away from sacrifice.

“This industry has limitless potential,” Ben says. “Where else, without a degree, can you be self-employed at a young age, building real equity? But you have to be consistent, treat people well, and be willing to put in the effort.”

Follow Ben and Allie on Instagram at [dairykingz](#) where they showcase their journey, the positive side of agriculture and promote dairy farming as a career pathway.

Allie King and husband Ben credit their success in dairying to setting goals and sticking to them.

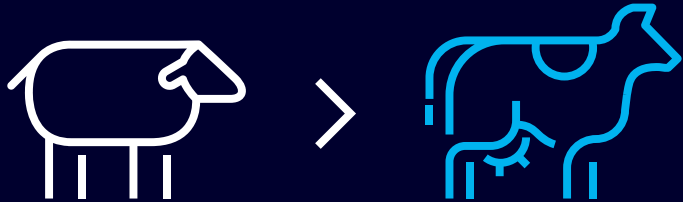


Allie King found a sense of community within the Dairy Women’s Network Starting out.

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A pack of working dogs waiting on their shepherd on Hawkswood Station near Cheviot. PHOTOS CRISTY BENSON



Cristy Benson ready for another adventure, overlooking Lake Pukaki.



Chasing



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

At 43, Cristy Benson did what many dream of, but few have the courage to attempt.

She traded a solid career in agricultural data analytics for a Ford Ranger, a Jayco caravan, and a life on the road with her two dogs and a camera.

She has travelled the length of the country and is now in the South Island, through farm gates from Cheviot to the Ashburton Lakes and the Mackenzie Country.

What began as a side hustle has become a full-time career built around documenting New Zealand's rural heart: the animals, the people, and the honest work that binds them.

"I fell in love with cows," she says of her years at DairyNZ and AgResearch.

"I literally bought my first camera to take photos of forage varieties and high-performing cows staring straight down the barrel so I could use them for

science communications and reporting."

Now, Benson captures every facet of the agricultural sector through her lens, selling those images to agribusinesses in a niche market with a gap waiting to be filled.

Financially, it's growing - slowly.

She sold her Waikato home to kit out her rig and buy time to grow a client base. Commissions and print sales are climbing, and next she'll attend the Rural Women NZ Activate programme in Dunedin to sharpen her business skills.

"It's starting to pay. I didn't factor in how slow network-building is," she admits.

Life on the road

The challenges have been both logistical and emotional.

Benson had never towed a caravan before — or even slept in one — and the learning curve was steep.

"I wouldn't even say it's a curve. It's a vertical line," she laughs.

As a woman travelling alone, she says she feels safe 99% of the time, but her "antenna is always up," and Starlink on the caravan keeps her connected with friends back home.

"I don't get lonely. There's community everywhere."

Every day is different.

Benson says she never knows what kind of images she'll get,

only that the adventure keeps unfolding.

Benson is currently based in Kimbell, but it was Mid Canterbury that left a lasting impression.

One of her favourite images came while driving home from Lake Heron.

"As night fell, the shearers were driving out, and each car was kicking up dust in the dusk, with snowy mountains behind. It echoed the day's shearing, it was special."

The region's topography and its people keep pulling her back.

Five and a half weeks at Tamar Farms in Mt Somers became a turning point.

"They trusted me right off the bat and opened the farm up," she says. "I felt adopted, and I made very close friends with the staff."

On Saturdays, she'd head to the Mount Somers pub, starting with a pie from the general store and ending up swapping numbers with a Lions Club member who knew who was doing firewood that week.

"It's a wonderful way to crack the nut of a community," she says. "The reception is so positive, they want to be part of this ridiculous adventure."

Building trust

Benson knows that being invited onto a property is an act of trust.



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the light

Her background in “industry good” helps farmers relax.

“I say I used to work at DairyNZ and AgResearch, and now I travel the country as an agricultural photographer, and you see the shoulders drop.”

Her ability to speak the language of farming, paired with genuine enthusiasm for the sector, makes her welcome.

“I think farmers make the world go round,” she says.

Benson favours images that are gritty and raw: capturing farming in all its dirt and truth.

“I want natural movement, and scenes that reveal themselves: images you don’t even know to ask a photographer to get,” she says.

“I’m devoted. I’ve turned my life inside out to tell these stories. So many are down long gravel roads. It’s special to spend my life meeting people and uncovering what isn’t appreciated enough.”

That’s why she stays on-farm: for smoko banter and candid moments that happen only when people forget she’s holding a camera.

“I want images with emotional depth that really document the rhythms of farm life. “You’re only privy to them when you’re accepted as part of the team.”

Her two elderly terriers, Mr Cherub and Mr Truffles, help

break the ice.

They ride in the back seat of the Ranger and travel wherever she goes - with farmers’ permission.

“Maybe it’s actually the dogs people want on farm,” she jokes. “I’m just the bloody photographer tagging along.”

Finding beauty everywhere

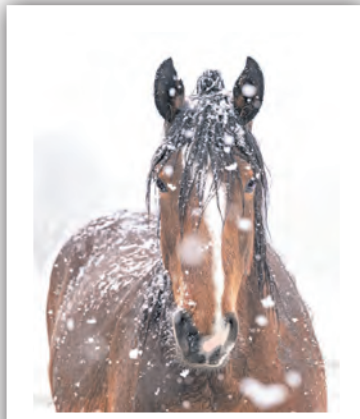
Next on her list is photographing braided rivers, though it’s animals - especially cattle - that Benson most loves to capture - inspiring her to name her business Sentient Imagery.

“Building a rapport with livestock and capturing what they’re feeling is what drives me. I long to bridge a connection between farm animals and people that may not see them the way I do, through photography,” Benson says.

Cows are naturally curious, making them perfect subjects.

“Cows like me,” she says. “If you’re sitting by a fence with a long lens, you usually have to wait for them to leave so you can get enough of a distance between you and the mob to be able to shoot them.”

Though life on the road takes her away from friends, photography itself is an anchor Benson says forces mindfulness in a culture where we’re too often glued to



Falling snowflakes peppering Xena at Silverstream Clydesdales in South Canterbury.

screens.

“I can see the beauty in everything,” she says.

And she means everything - even a heifer’s frozen cowpat with a sprig of clover pushing through the frost.

“It was beautiful.”

Benson is forever chasing the perfect light in an ever-changing landscape.

Fog that ruins a morning can become cinema by afternoon.

“What you perceive as a challenge is sometimes the best thing that could have happened,” she says, describing shafts of light

cutting through haze above the Awatere.

“You come away doing cartwheels.”

Advice for others

Her advice for anyone tempted by life on the road? Give it a test drive first.

“Try long weekends and annual leave. It took me a few years of little tests before I finally got here. The key was knowing who I am. I know without a doubt this is what I’m supposed to be doing.”

You can view Cristys work at www.sentientimagery.co.nz.



Shearers leaving the woolshed on Castle Ridge Station, with headlights on and dust kicking up behind them. PHOTOS CRISTY BENSON

Portrait of a shaver roaming Hawkswood Station.



Wintered dairy cows offered a new break of kale crop in Valetta, Mid Canterbury.



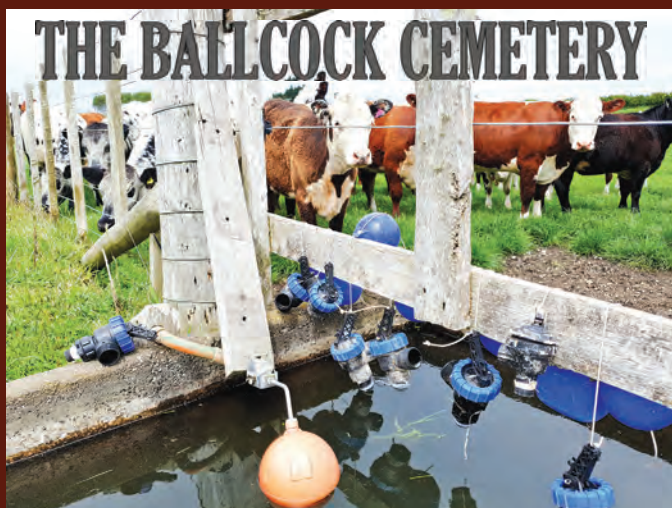
A Red Devon beefie — iconic to Tamar Farms — illuminated by a strip of fading light in Mt Somers.

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Farmers dig deeper into stream health

SOPHIE BLAIR

After a busy few months on farm, the Lagmhor Westerfield catchment group is gearing up to get into the swing of things again as spring kicks in.

We have continued to monitor nitrate levels within the community, using Mid Canterbury Catchment Collectives (MCCC) nitrate probe, and are delving into understanding the health of a waterway in a broader sense.

One of the biggest focuses of the group when it was first formed was biodiversity.

We didn't know what to plant, how to plant successfully, and where the best bang for buck was.

After receiving some training on stream health assessments, through MCCC, we have started the process of completing stream health assessments of the waterways in our catchment area.

Here we are looking at the streambed, for plant growth, algal growth and sediment; water, for clarity, flow, temperature and conductivity; streambank, for plants and erosion; and using a net to capture and identify bugs and larger life forms.

This has been a great interactive tool to get people involved and

thinking about the surface water body health more holistically than just focusing in on nitrates.

In the next little while, we will also be taking some eDNA samples of the waterways. These have been funded by MCCC and provide a more detailed list of the type of vertebrates and invertebrates that are present in the water way.

We are looking forward to seeing the analysis of these samples and finding out if there is anything exciting present.

Come some warmer weather, we will get into some more riparian planting individually on farm.

The eDNA results and stream health assessments will be useful here.

Hopefully, we will be able to make some more calculated decisions on what to plant and where to plant, to best protect what we have and enhance what we need to.

The end of September draws to a close the original funding that started up MCCC and our catchment groups.

From first meeting in December 2022, the Lagmhor Westerfield catchment group has had some great achievements.

By putting people together in a room, around a spring-fed creek, or standing in a paddock; we have allowed a space for farmer-led



Sophie Blair (left), Lagmhor Westerfield catchment group chairperson Darryl Oldman and (behind) John Blair examine the results of water testing. PHOTO SUPPLIED

learning, without the scientific numbers, but rather, with hands-on experience.

We have gathered nitrate test results from a range of groundwater and surface water sites across two years of testing.

We have undertaken a catch crop investigation at farm scale using

different crops and animal classes.

We have held a field day with help from Plant and Food research and their demonstration plots.

We have completed riparian plantings on farm, and as mentioned above are working our way through stream health assessments, eDNA sampling, and

further planting.

This has been a great effort by our community in this short period of time, and could not have been done without the funding and support from MCCC.

Sophie Blair is the Lagmhor Westerfield catchment group facilitator.



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Feel the Burn: SpicyBoys firing up the Ashburton Show

CLAIRE INKSON

The Ashburton A&P Association is spicing things up this spring with the first-ever Ashvegas Chilli Competition, run in partnership with Christchurch hot sauce company SpicyBoys.

On Saturday 1 November, up to 30 contestants will take the stage at the Ashburton Showgrounds, pushing through rounds of chilli sauces and fresh chillies of increasing intensity until only one remains - earning the title of 2025 Ashvegas Chilli Champion.

Founder Jay Madgwick-Pamment says chilli contests are equal parts endurance test and theatre.

"A chilli competition works because there are more masochists in the world than sadists," he laughs. "And there are a lot of people who like watching masochism. It's one of the most intense extreme sports — it's all injury, and only one person gets the glory."

A showstopper for the crowd

The competition promises more than burning tongues: expect fierce faces, big laughs, and plenty of entertainment as participants sweat it out for glory.

Whether you're a seasoned chilli-eater or a curious first-timer,

the event is open to anyone brave enough to step up.

"Why would anyone pay to put themselves through the agony?" Jay laughs. "Because it's fun, it's unforgettable, and there's serious prize money on the line. Plus, the endorphin rush is real."

For Ashburton, SpicyBoys will bring the format honed at their annual Southern Spice Festival in Christchurch.

"Ashburton will be a mix of sauces and chillies, because it's not full chilli season yet. But the principle is the same: it's last person standing. It's not speed, it's a mental and physical gauntlet."

Competitors will face round after round of escalating heat.

"At a point it stops being about how spicy it is," Jay explains. "It's about how you manage your stomach, and how you manage the mental side, because of the massive endorphin rush."

Spectators can expect more than just sweat and red faces.

"It's always a highlight," Jay says. "The determination of the competitors and the atmosphere created by the crowd make it an experience not to be missed."

Prizes include \$500 cash for first place (courtesy of RD Petroleum), \$250 for second, and a SpicyBoys Challenge Box for third. Contestant entry cost is \$40, with registrations open now at ashburtonshow.co.nz.

Watching is free with Show entry.

From roadside stand to supermarket shelves

SpicyBoys' story began in 2018 with a lucky supermarket find of Carolina Reaper peppers — known as one of the hottest in the world.

"Me and my brother found Reapers being sold at New World for the same price as regular chillies. We bought them all and made a sauce. It was really hot and horrible," Jay recalls.

His brother Max soon left for Sweden, but Jay carried on, selling his sauces at farmers' markets and even from a homemade roadside stand.

"I did that for about a year and a half. I met quite a few cool people from there, like Cookie Time. Then we moved into Riverside Market, and soon after, bigger customers like Bacon Bros, Smokey T's and Empire Chicken came on board. Those guys grew so fast they needed hot sauce from me faster than I realised, and I just had to keep up."

That led to the opening of a factory in Woolston, Christchurch, in 2021, where sauce is now produced on a large scale to meet demand.

The range has since expanded into New World supermarkets, Mitre 10 MEGA barbecue sections, and restaurants across the South Island, with Foodstuffs North Island now coming on board.

Jay's brother is now in Perth, and while the rest of the family help out occasionally, Jay is still hoping Max will return to home soil and join the business.

"I can't wait for the day he decides to return home and join Spicy Boys."

The sauces that bite back

The SpicyBoys line-up covers the whole heat spectrum: from the approachable Gateway Sweet Chilli to the brutally hot Lizard Exposer Pure Reaper.

"We go from sweet chilli all the way up to pretty much pure Carolina Reaper. That one is about 70% chilli. It's very uncomfortable," Jay admits.

His personal favourites are the Red and Green Chipotle and the OG, though lately he's been eating a lot of their Hot Honey, a collaboration with Mount White Station.

"I'm actually eating those protein bowls that went viral on TikTok. Hot Honey is amazing on them. We quickly became one of the leading hot honeys in New Zealand and the first into South Island supermarkets."

Jay is proud that SpicyBoys is a local brand through and through.

"All of our fresh produce — chillies, garlic, onions, capsicums — is locally grown. The only things we import are ingredients you can't get in New Zealand, like black pepper."

The company currently buys from six farms nationwide. Early on, they sourced from Harbour Head Growers in North Canterbury until that business shut down during COVID.

"Now we've got a new grower starting in Kaiapoi this year. Chillies are a fickle business, so it's great to see new growers coming through."

Building an iconic Kiwi brand

SpicyBoys survived COVID, grew through hospitality partnerships, and continues to thrive despite today's tough economy.



From humble beginnings: SpicyBoys founder Jay Madgwick-Pamment began selling his sauces from roadside stalls.

THE GREAT ASHVEGAS CHILLI COMPETITION

When: Saturday 1 November, 11am – 2pm

Where: Ashburton Showgrounds, Brucefield

Prizes: 1st \$500, 2nd \$250, 3rd SpicyBoys Challenge Box

Entry: \$40 competitor fee at ashburtonshow.co.nz

Jay has big ambitions.

"The goal is to build SpicyBoys into one of those iconic New Zealand brands, like Cookie Time or Whittaker's. From there, we'll look to export."

But the real satisfaction, he says, comes from events like Ashburton's.

"I'm a massive fan of the rural, small towns of New Zealand. If the kids have the coolest time, then the whole day is a success."





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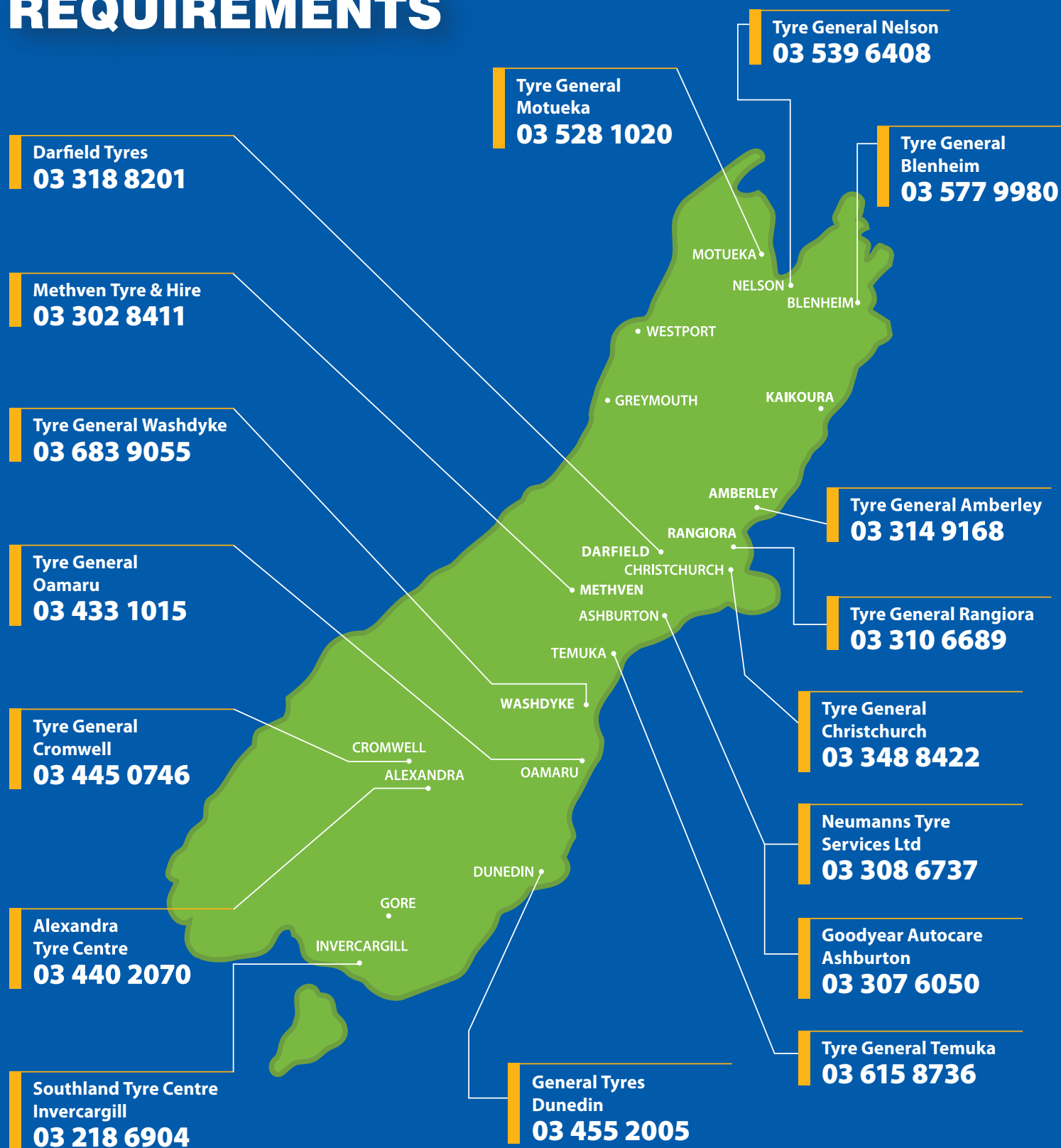
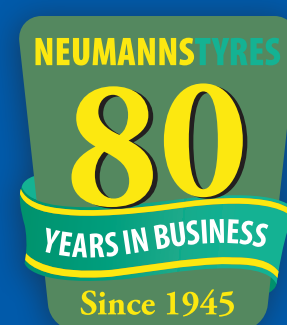
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Neumanns Tyres: 80 Years driven by family, people, and community



The Neumann faces behind the tread. Pictured, from left, are Vinnie, Alan, Ian and Emma Hintz (née Neumann). They're the family team keeping Mid Canterbury and South Islanders on the road at Neumanns Tyres. This year, it celebrates 80 years in business.

From an £87 gamble in Ashburton to 17 South Island shops, Neumanns' family values and rural roots keep generations moving.

What began with Len Neumann's gamble in 1945 is now a three-generation family success story with 17 shops across the South Island. Neumanns Tyres has always been more than just a tyre business, it's a family story deeply rooted in community and rural life.

It all began when founder Len Neumann invested his £87 life savings into a tyre-repair venture. With little more than a second-hand steam vulcaniser, some steel levers, and sheer determination, Len gave old tyres new life for local farmers and families. In

those post-war years, when nothing was wasted, his work kept Mid Canterbury moving.

Eighty years on, that same grit and commitment remain the backbone of Neumanns Tyres. Brothers Alan and Ian Neumann, who took over from their parents more than 40 years ago, have grown the business into a trusted South Island network, while staying true to their Ashburton roots. Supported by their wives, Christine and Judy, they've kept the company grounded in the values their father lived by: hard work, honesty, and service to the community.

That commitment has always extended to their staff. Many names are well-known to customers, including Bruce Bensdorp, who marks 50 years with Neumanns this year, his brother Richard with 43, and long-serving office cornerstone Maxine Muckle, with 40 years of dedication. Their loyalty reflects a company where staff aren't just employees, they're family.

Alan is quick to credit the farming community with Neumanns' growth, particularly the irrigation and dairy booms that transformed Mid Canterbury. "Irrigation and dairy farming have been huge for us. Ruralco has been a great partner too," he says. Ian agrees, adding that "it's the staff who have been the big part of the success,

experience you just can't replace."

Innovation has also played its part. Neumanns has embraced changing tyre technology and even developed Torque Alert, an in-house safety system that helps keep heavy vehicles secure on the road. Yet, despite growth and progress, decisions are still made the old-fashioned way, around the smoko table, with input from the whole team.

Today, the third generation is stepping up. Alan's son Vinnie and Ian's daughter Emma have each worked across the business for more than 15 years, learning the ropes from the shop floor to management. Both are passionate about carrying on the Neumann way, looking after people, and supporting rural communities.

As Alan reflects on 55 years in

the business, his eyes are firmly on the future. "My ambition is to be here when the business turns 100. I might just come along for a bit of cake," he laughs.

From keeping tractors turning in the paddock to making sure family cars are safe on the road, Neumanns Tyres has been part of the fabric of rural Mid Canterbury for eight decades. And as the next generation takes the wheel, one thing is certain, the road ahead looks just as strong as the tread they've built their name on.

"We know that despite our best efforts, there are stories and contributions that don't make it into print. Every story, every memory, and every milestone forms part of the rich 80-year history of Neumanns Tyres."

Slugs can smell it a mile away (almost)

BioGro certified Ironmax Pro® draws the slug crowds

We tend to underestimate slugs. And we do that to our crops' peril.

Slugs might not literally be able to smell Ironmax Pro miles away, but their multiple olfactory sensors can certainly detect it even from a considerable distance.

Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Regional Manager Upper North Island, has seen the damage slugs can do but, he says, Ironmax Pro plays on that sensory capacity, luring them away from vulnerable crops and seedlings.

The breakthrough Colzactive® technology in Ironmax Pro, which contains specially selected oil seed rape extracts, makes it slugs' favourite food. Pieter says 20 different plant species were evaluated and 50 molecules identified that were attractive to slugs.

"Ultimately two molecules from oil seed rape were selected for their outstandingly attractive and palatable characteristics from the slugs' perspectives. These are the basis of the Colzactive technology, which enhances the Ironmax Pro bait taste and, importantly, the efficacy of Ironmax Pro compared to others."

Cage trials (2020) showed that slugs actively preferred feeding on Ironmax Pro to feeding on plant seedlings.

Ironmax Pro pellets are manufactured with the finest durum wheat, which ensures slugs ingest sufficient quantities of the active substance to cause death. At the same time, slugs don't overeat, leaving enough bait for other slugs.

Pieter explains that a unique, slow drying

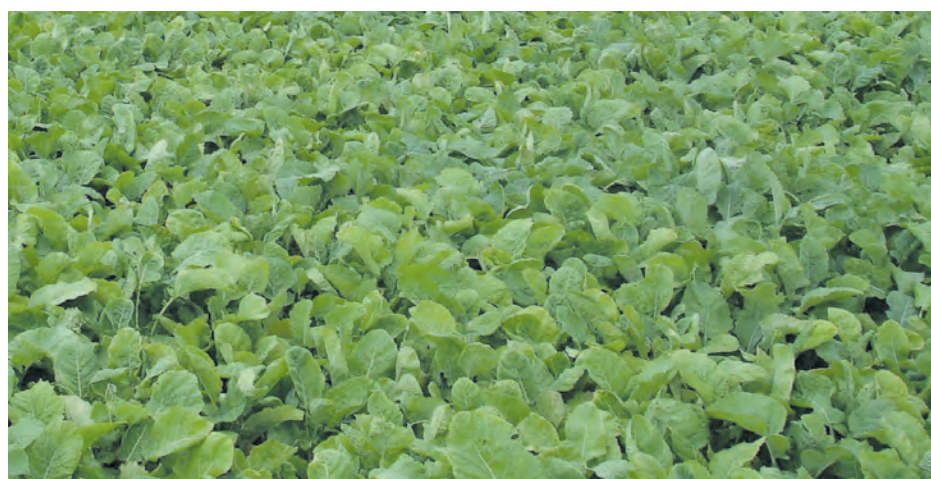
process makes baits very rain fast, allowing the bait to resist up to 60 mm of rain. "That's unlike some baits, which dissolve in the wet. This is problematic as that's exactly where slugs flourish."

Ironmax Pro contains the optimized active ingredient 24.2 g/kg ferric phosphate anhydrous, referred to as IPMax. Iron (ferric) phosphate is a natural component of soil. In Ironmax Pro, it works as a stomach poison on slugs and is fatal once ingested. Feeding stops almost immediately. Ironmax Pro also has a consistent, wider spreadability with a recommended application rate of 5 - 7 kg/ha. With 60,000 baits per kilogram, Pieter says the product has excellent ballistic properties. "The uniform pellet size and innovative Ironmax Pro manufacturing process mean bait can be spread at widths of up to 24 m."

Slug populations typically peak in autumn and spring which is when damage is most noticeable. During the colder months, the pests retreat under plant matter or to other sheltered, damp places. Grey field slugs (*Deroceras reticulatum*) and their close relation brown field slugs (*Deroceras invadens*) have the potential to wipe out entire crops. Their mottled colour and night feeding enables them to go largely unnoticed.

To monitor them, Pieter advises putting down a slug mat or a damp hessian sack. "Leave it there overnight and check it next morning. Even one slug may signal a problem."

Pet and stock safety is also an important consideration. "Stock break-outs and gates



Well established crops indicate good slug control at germination.

accidentally left open are part of farming life, no matter how careful you are. Similarly, the family labrador, or huntaway, needs to be safe when it's stretching its legs or working on the farm. With Ironmax Pro, there's no problem – it's also safer for beneficial insects."

Get in early is another important tip, Pieter says. "Once crops are planted, Ironmax Pro should already be on the ground. Otherwise, you're on the back foot. Slugs are aware of seedlings, even as plants are just breaking the surface. By the time slugs are feeding on emerging seedlings, it's already too late. Seedlings damaged by slugs usually won't recover. The goal is to protect the crop. Once feeding damage has stopped, that goal has been achieved. We don't have to see dead slugs to know we were successful."

Travelling up to 13 metres in one night,

slugs are phenomenal feeders – capable of consuming more than 50% of their own body weight. Unprotected, damage to plants – especially seedlings – can happen surprisingly quickly. "Infestations can appear seemingly out of the blue," Pieter adds. "Population explosions are common as the pests are capable of producing 300 eggs in their 13-month lifespan."

Slugs get off to a fast start, feeding immediately after hatching. They reach sexual maturity at three to nine months of age. "Slugs may be small, but don't underestimate the damage they can do. A few bites, and your seedling is gone."

For more information on Ironmax Pro, talk to your local technical merchant or contact Pieter Van Der Westhuizen, UPL NZ Regional Manager Upper North Island, at 021 392 740.

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SY Silhouette stands out for its superior ability to withstand lodging, giving growers added confidence in maintaining crop standability and achieving top yields. Soil pH is also a factor — barley performs best at a pH of 6.0+ so if lime is needed, plan ahead as it takes time to take effect.

A fine, firm seedbed is crucial for even germination. Spring sowing generally allows for good conditions, but don't be tempted to cut

corners. Direct drilling can work when conditions allow, cultivated seedbeds tend to achieve stronger, more consistent establishment - helping to maximise yields. Selecting the right sowing rate is also important — targeting established plant numbers per square metre is key to determining a specific sowing rate.

Protecting seedlings in the early stages is vital to safeguard yield. A fungicidal and insecticidal seed treatment provides valuable insurance against diseases and pests. Weed competition is another factor to stay on top of — a combination of pre and post-emergence herbicides, applied at the correct times, are usually the best approach in spring barley.

Finally, variety selection underpins everything. SY Silhouette ticks all the boxes, delivering strong, reliable performance. SY Silhouette has a wide sowing window through until late October. Visit cates.co.nz for further information.



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Cultivating Community:

Ashburton A&P Show gears up for big weekend



Claire Inkson
RURAL
EDITOR

Ashburton A&P Show president Ben Stock is heading into his second and final year at the helm, and he's determined to go out with a bang.

With the theme Cultivating Community, this year's show is all about connection, collaboration, and good old-fashioned country fun.

"The A&P is about being that link between town and country," says Stock.

"At least once a year we want to bring everyone together in a fun, educational way. Communities achieve much more collectively than as individuals, and the show is a great way to celebrate that."

The 2025 programme promises plenty of fresh highlights.

Pendarves and Hinds Young Farmers are teaming up for a Bark Up, bringing their Huntaways and stock dogs into the bar area on Saturday.

The show will also host its first-ever chili eating competition, run by Christchurch-based Spicy Boys.

Providing value to show-goers is at the top of Ashburton A&P Show president Ben Stock's mind.

PHOTO ASHBURTON GUARDIAN



Contestants will pay \$50 to enter, with prizes for the top three and plenty of fiery entertainment for spectators.

The Clash of the Colleges returns, double the size of last year, with more than 200 intermediate and secondary students testing their skills in practical, farm-themed challenges.

Food also takes centre stage,

with Formosa Restaurant and LeaderBrand teaming up to give away free vegetable stir-fries, while the Pacifica community will prepare a traditional umu - similar to a hangi.

Local restaurants will once again compete in the Burger Bash, creating burgers with Mid Canterbury produce for the public to judge.

The Celebrity Shears are back too, with reigning champion Kim Reid defending her title against local personalities.

For those looking to make a day of it, boutique picnic spots around the main oval can be booked, giving families or businesses prime real estate at the heart of the action.

Alongside the new attractions,

the favourites remain firmly in place.

The animal and pet shed - a hit with children last year - returns even bigger, joined by vintage machinery, go-karts, and pony rides.

An alpaca show will take place on November 1, while the Trans-Tasman dog trials, hugely popular two years ago, will also return.

Stock says the committee has been key to keeping the programme fresh.

"We've been really lucky to attract new members with fresh energy and ideas. Times are tough, so we're working harder than ever to give people a great experience. The show is about the whole community, and it only happens because of the community."

With ticket prices now set at \$20 for adults, and free entry for school-aged children, Stock says providing value is top of mind.

"If we're asking more, we need to give more too. That's why we're adding new ideas on top of the old favourites."

As his presidency draws to a close, Stock has a simple message for Mid Canterbury:

"Just come along. Get yourselves through the gate and let us entertain you. We're working really hard to make sure the Ashburton A&P Show is something the whole community can be proud of."

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What's on at the Ashburton A&P Show



Along with some new events and highlights, the old crowd favourites like vintage machinery will make a come-back.
PHOTOS ASHBURTON GUARDIAN



The Clash of the Colleges will be back at this year's show.

Theme: Cultivating Community
When: October 31 — November 1, 2025
Where: Ashburton Showgrounds

Highlights

- **Young Farmers Bark Up** — Huntaways and stock dogs in action, Saturday in the bar area.
- **Chili Eating Competition** — Ashburton's first, run by Spicy Boys (Saturday).
- **Clash of the Colleges** — Over 200 students in farming challenges (Friday).
- **Food Collaborations** — Free stir-fries (Formosa + LeaderBrand) and a traditional Pacifica umu.
- **Celebrity Shears** — Local

- personalities battle it out in the shearing pens.
- **Burger Bash** — Local restaurants create burgers with Mid Canterbury produce.
- **Boutique Picnic Spots** — Book prime ringside real estate for families or business groups.

Old Favourites

- Animal & pet shed (bigger than last year).
 - Vintage machinery.
 - Free pony rides & go-karts.
 - Alpaca show (Nov 1).
 - Children's colouring competition.
 - Trans-Tasman dog trials return.
- Tickets:** \$20 adults, school-aged children free.

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AMBERLEY A&P SHOW

Amberley A&P Show returns with food, fun, and community spirit

CLAIRE INKSON

Spring in Hurunui wouldn't be complete without the Amberley A&P Show, a much-loved one-day celebration of rural life that draws thousands of visitors each year.

On Saturday November 1, the Amberley Domain will come alive from 7am, packed with competitions, entertainment, and plenty of family fun.

Tickets are just \$15, with children under 15 free, making it one of the most affordable big days out on the local calendar.

Show president Sarah Dalzell says the Amberley Show is more than just a competition ground — it's a showcase of the region's people, produce, and passion.

"It's not just for the farming crowd, it's for everyone," she says. "We just want people to come out and really enjoy the country."

"It's affordable, kids are free, and it's about having fun: whether it's a child at their first showjumping round, or families enjoying an ice cream while watching the grand parade."

A tradition of involvement

Dalzell, who has been involved with the show for over 12 years, first signed up when her children were competing with ponies.

"I've always been involved in

community — Plunket, school, the hunt club — and the A&P was a natural step.

"We've got such a fantastic committee here, all locals, who just get in and do it," she says.

For her, the appeal has always been about giving kids and families a chance to take part, no matter their background.

"They don't have to have the flashiest pony or win all the ribbons. It's about smiling faces and the joy of just having a go."

Food at the forefront

One of Amberley's most distinctive drawcards is its Hoof to Hotplate competition, a true paddock-to-plate experience where local beef and lamb are showcased alongside North Canterbury wines and local Brew Moon craft beer.

"The Hoof to Hotplate is massive," Dalzell says. "Local farmers supply the meat, there's tasting, wine, cider, and even burgers straight off the barbecue. It's always a highlight and such a great example of what our region can produce."

Packed programme

Beyond food and wine, the showgrounds will be buzzing with activity. Visitors can expect:

- Equestrian events including show hunter, show jumping, and pleasure horse classes.

- A huge sheep and cattle section, with the new Hazlett Prime Lamb class taking centre stage.
- Woodchopping, Highland dancing, and dog trials.
- Vintage tractors and vehicles
- The always-popular pet lamb, calf, and dog competitions.
- A lively terrier race

Honouring heritage

Tradition runs deep at the Amberley Show.

The Keith Stackhouse Pavilion, named after one of the show's longest-standing volunteers, will once again host baking, floral arrangements, and the fiercely competitive scone and egg classes, with strong entries from local schools.

The Loretta Memorial Cup, recognising horsemanship and sportsmanship in memory of a much-loved horsewoman, will also be contested.

"It's judged on more than just riding, it's about sportsmanship, etiquette, and the spirit of the day," Dalzell explains.

More than a show

While the competitions are at the heart of the day, the show has a wider impact.

Last year, proceeds helped fund new lights for the local rugby club, just one example of how the event reinvests in the community.



2025 Amberley A&P Show president Sarah Dalzell says the Amberley show is a chance to showcase the region's people, produce and passion. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

"We don't make a lot out of the show, but what we do goes back into the community," Dalzell says. "It's about working together: the rugby club, the squash club, local volunteers. Everyone plays a part." And with good weather, the

show can attract up to 15,000 people through the gates. "If it's fine, the atmosphere is just incredible," says Dalzell. "It really feels like the whole district has come together for one special day."

EVENT DETAILS

Amberley A&P Show
Where: Amberley Domain, 50 Douglas Road, Amberley.
When: Saturday, 1 November 2025
Gates open from 7am
Ticket prices: \$15 entry, children under 15 free
For more information, updates, and schedules, follow the Amberley A&P Show Facebook page or check out the online schedule.

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AGRICALENDAR October-November 2025

OCTOBER 3

Mayfield A&P
Association Centennial
fundraising dinner
Mayfield Hall
Mayfield A&P
Show Facebook page

OCTOBER 3

Courtney A&P
Association cocktail party
Kirwee Community Hall
<https://www.facebook.com/p/Courtenay-AP-Show>

OCTOBER 11

Lincoln Young Farmers Club
Charity Bark-up
The Famous Grouse Hotel
Lincoln Young Farmers Club
Facebook page

OCTOBER 15

Rural Ladies
Boots & Bubbles
Ahaura Community Hall
<https://www.dwn.co.nz/events/boots-and-bubbles-rural-ladies-evening/>

OCTOBER 16

Rural Ladies
Boots & Bubbles
Kokatahi Hall
<https://www.dwn.co.nz/events/boots-and-bubbles-rural-ladies-evening-2/>

OCTOBER 17

Rural Ladies
Boots & Bubbles
Whataroa Community Hall
<https://www.dwn.co.nz/events/boots-and-bubbles-rural-ladies-evening3/>

OCTOBER 18

Ellesmere Show
Leeston
<https://ellesmereshow.co.nz/>

OCTOBER 25

Northern A&P Show
Rangiora Showgrounds
<https://www.northernaandp.co.nz/therangiorashow>

OCTOBER 30, 6PM FOR A 6:30PM START

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Mid Canterbury Rural Support and Safer Mid Canterbury
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Information on Mid Canterbury Rural support Trust Facebook page

OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 1

Ashburton A&P Show
Ashburton showgrounds
www.ashburtonshow.co.nz

OCTOBER 31

West Otago Young Farmers
Club Halloween
Fancy dress disco
Recreation grounds, Taipanui
West Otago Young Farmers
Facebook page

OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 2

Hurunui Garden Festival
Hurunui
<https://www.hurunuigardenfestival.com/>

OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 2

Celebrate Cheviot Festival
Cheviot
<https://www.cheviotnz.com/celebrate>

NOVEMBER 1

Amberley A&P Show
Amberley Domain
<https://www.facebook.com/amberleyshow/>

NOVEMBER 1

Balfour Young
Farmers Club bark-up
Balfour Rugby Club
Balfour Young Farmers Club
Facebook page

NOVEMBER 1

Hinds Young Farmers Club
Spring Fling Ball
Collegiate Rugby Club Rooms
Hinds Young Farmers Club
Facebook page

NOVEMBER 2

Amberley House open day
Amberley House,
258 Amberley Beach rd
Amberley House Facebook page

NOVEMBER 8

Marlborough A&P Show
Blenheim
<https://www.marlboroughshow.co.nz/showinformation>

NOVEMBER 8

Waiau Fireworks
Waiau
<https://www.facebook.com/waiaufireworks>



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A taste of French country in Canterbury



Pottery Cotswold houses are currently on Milly's list of favourites. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

CLAIRE INKSON

Growth doesn't come from comfort zones."

That's the mantra of Amberley's newest business owner, Milly Henderson.

When Henderson first wandered into Out of the Bleu eight years ago, she went home buzzing to her husband, James.

"I came home to James, and I said 'I've just been into the most beautiful shop. If I ever got the opportunity to buy it, that would be an absolute dream come true.'"

This April, she did.

At 35, after five years in real estate and a recent season of maternity leave with daughter Chloe, Henderson stepped into ownership of the French-country gift shop behind Amberley's iconic Blue Dairy, with the intent of carrying forward a local icon while adding her own mark.

"I wanted to keep it going," she says. "It would've been detrimental to the community if it had just shut the doors."

Former owner and founder Julie Cann "built something really special," and Henderson's first move has been continuity: keeping the much-loved aesthetic, an

affordable price point for locals, and the welcoming, friendly feel.

"I'm very conscious of keeping it affordable," she says. "I'm trying to have that point of difference while staying true to myself because I believe in the products that I'm selling."

Farming's ripple effect

Amberley's resurgence as a weekend destination of boutique shopping, coffee, and a cheeky wine owes plenty to a reported surge in rural confidence, Henderson believes.

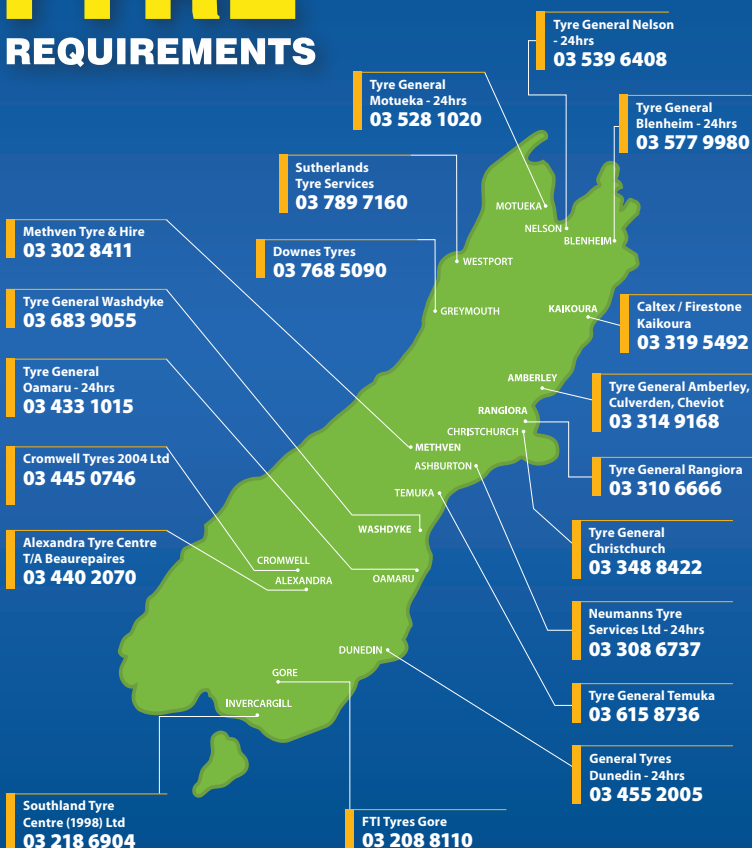
"Small rural towns like Amberley seem to be doing quite well because of the farming community behind them."

She's deliberate about keeping stock unique from other local businesses in the small service town.

"I'm conscious of not stocking the same things that other stores are selling and giving customers a really good variety of shopping experiences in Amberley."

Events have a flow-on effect too, and Henderson is hoping to make the most of upcoming regional events like the Amberley A&P Show and the Hurunui Garden Festival.

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Normally open Tuesday to Saturday, she will open right through big weekends to catch the increase in visitors.

Her handmade lampshades will again feature at Saddlewood Garden during the festival, and she is taking a stall to the Hanmer Springs fete with help from her mum and aunt.

Wearing all the hats

Running a small business has meant Henderson has had to learn new skills. "You're a merchandiser, you're a buyer, you are the accountant, you're your own therapist, and your customers' therapist sometimes."

Social media was a steep learning curve, but she tries to "be herself."

"I'm very shy in front of the camera. I find it very hard to put myself out there," she admits. "I think people appreciate the realness."

Behind the scenes, she is modernising systems and reach to navigate a challenging economic climate.

"We have brought in a point-of-sale system, and we're building a website so we can sell from anywhere."

It takes a village

The early makeover of the store was a family affair, and it helps to have a builder for a husband and a dad who is a professional painter.

"My husband is like a bull at a gate," she says.

A small tidy-up over Easter quickly snowballed into more extensive changes.

"James did so much, and Dad and I were in the store painting until the evening."

The refresh opened the front and created better room for clothing, while Henderson's "wee side hustle," lampshades she began during Chloe's nap times, has slotted naturally into the mix.

The juggle is real, and the support of family and friends has been crucial.

"We're really lucky to have the support of friends and both sets of parents to help with the sharing of life admin and taking care of Chloe."

Being a role model for her daughter is key to Henderson's motivation.



Milly Henderson took over Out of the Bleu in April this year after a career in Real Estate.

"The main reason that I do this is actually for Chloe," she says. "I want her to grow up and see that her mom is working hard at something that she loves."

Managing impostor syndrome

When curating her wares for customers, Henderson says she has learned to have confidence in her instincts.

"You have to back yourself because the whole reason you are here is because you believe in the products you're selling."

Customers' enthusiasm helps. Regulars beeline for pieces they saw online, and they send photos of lampshades and baskets "in their house."

"They're seeing it and they're

following our journey, which is really cool."

For other mums on the fence

Asked what she would tell another mum with a big idea, Henderson does not hesitate. even if the timing is not perfect.

"Growth doesn't come from comfort zones, just do it, even if the timing is not perfect."

For now, it is baby steps: keep the store fresh so locals always find a surprise, stay open across the big weekends, and get the website live.

"Buying this business is like a dream come true," Henderson says. "I'm doing exactly what I've always dreamt of doing, I'm exactly where I should be."



Milly Henderson has kept the French country aesthetic of the store from the previous owner, but has added her own mark.



Owning Out of the Bleu has been a dream come true for Milly Henderson. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



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NORTHERN A&P ASSOCIATION RANGIORA SHOW

Where: Rangiora Showgrounds, 156 Ashley Street, Rangiora, 7400

When: Friday 24th (Equestrian only) Show Day: Saturday 25th October 2025

Time: 8 am — 6 pm

Show Day: Adults — \$15, Children under 5 years — free, Youth 5yrs — 16yrs — \$5, Family (2 adult, 2 youth) — \$35. Buy tickets at the gate.

Highlights:

The Show features some of Canterbury's top equestrian and rural sporting talent, with highlights including show hunter events, shearing, wood chopping, Highland dancing, and dog trials. Visitors can also enjoy the livestock competitions, where leading breeders showcase a variety of animals, including sheep, cattle, poultry, donkeys, alpacas, and more.

Local creativity is on display in the Produce Shed, featuring entries in cooking, needlework, knitting, hand spun, art, photography, woodwork & models, junior arts & crafts, murals, and flwer arranging.

Beyond the competitions, there's something for everyone: food, craft, market and trade stalls, vintage machinery displays, and a full programme of entertainment. Families will love the Kids Zone, live music, motorbike stunt riders, mounted games, rare breeds, trick and stunt horse rider, farmyard fun, pony rides, duck herding, and of course, the much-loved Terrier Race.

New for this year: don't miss the Furniture Race — with both motorised and pedalled entries — and the search for Mr and Mrs Rangiora, who will take to the catwalk in our Country Glam Fashion Show!

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Joining forces for rural mental health



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Mid Canterbury Mental Health advocate and founder of Lean on a Gate Craig Wiggins says the time for talking about health is over – and it's time for action.

"Communities want a trusted model, with support behind it," Wiggins says.

A powerful new partnership between MATES in Construction New Zealand (MATES) and grassroots rural mental health initiative Lean on a Gate is set to meet that needs - bringing life-saving mental health training to rural communities.

"We've spent two years listening, and now with MATES analysing rural needs, we're confident this will be huge for rural New Zealand."

The collaboration, announced at Parliament in August, marks the beginning of a significant rollout across rural New Zealand.

The first community to benefit will be Mid Canterbury, where the official launch will take place in October.

Building on grassroots connections

For Wiggins, the partnership is the culmination of years spent listening to rural people.

"Slade McFarland, Jason Herrick and I have been out on the road for the last four years running Lean on a Gate. Everywhere we went, people told us they needed more support and more training in mental health," Wiggins says.

"With the help of MATES, we now have a proven, accredited programme that can be delivered in rural communities: from awareness sessions through to Connector training and suicide assist. That means rural service professionals like stock agents, vets, agronomists and farm staff, as well as everyday people in schools, sports clubs and businesses, will know how to identify when someone's struggling, and how to safely connect them with help."

Why MATES fits rural NZ

MATES in Construction was established in 2019 to tackle high suicide rates in the construction sector. Their model combines workplace-based awareness training, connectors who are trained to spot and respond to signs of distress, a 24/7 support line, and ongoing case management.

John Chapman, chief executive of MATES, says extending

the programme into rural communities through the new "Mates of MATES" initiative is a natural fit.

"We know rural people care deeply for one another. Working alongside Wiggy and Lean on a Gate allows us to foster this care and pair it with life-changing and life-saving skills," Chapman says.

Wiggins agrees, noting the crossover between rural and construction work.

"When you think about contractors building irrigators, laneways, sheds and fencing: that's construction. The industries are closely connected, and the challenges are similar."

Starting in Mid Canterbury

Mid Canterbury was chosen as the starting point because of concerning mental health statistics in the region.

"We'll be starting here because

we've already built trust and relationships in the community, and sadly the need is very real," Wiggins says.

"But this isn't a trial, it's a full launch. From here we'll expand into other communities, and importantly, we'll keep reconnecting with trained connectors to support them."

The aim is to train at least 60 people in Mid Canterbury in the first round. Wiggins says the ripple effect will be powerful.

"Imagine 60 trained connectors spread through schools, sports clubs, rural businesses and farms. The flow-on impact across the community will be enormous."

Collaboration is key

For Wiggins, the partnership represents more than just training. It's about knitting together existing networks.

"We've always invited the Rural Support Trust, GPs, police and

local mental health providers to be part of our Club Connect sessions. There's no silver bullet coming out of Wellington, but we have great people in our own communities who can help. By working together, we can make a real difference."

The next step will be expanding the programme nationwide, supported by industry and community partners.

Wiggins hopes businesses, corporates and sports organisations will get behind the initiative, helping to fund training for community groups and volunteers who might otherwise miss out.

"Our vision is simple: empower people to identify when their friends, whānau, colleagues or clients need support - and know how to journey with them until the right help is found."

Want to Get Involved? For more information or to register interest in training, contact wiggy@leanonagate.co.nz.



Facebook Competition Winner — SiloStay Getaway

The Rural Guardian is delighted to announce the winner of our recent Facebook competition for a night's accommodation at SiloStay in Little River. Congratulations to Rebecca Sandford, who will enjoy a unique getaway in one of SiloStay's award-winning silo units on the scenic Banks Peninsula.

Thank you to everyone who entered via our Facebook page — your support and enthusiasm made the competition a huge success. A special thank you to SiloStay for partnering with us and offering such a memorable prize.



Lean on a gate founder Craig Wiggins (left) and MATES in Construction NZ chief executive John Chapman say the extending of the MATES initiative into the rural sector is a natural fit.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

36 INTERNATIONAL RURAL WOMEN'S DAY

Nicola Grigg
Minister for women
and associate minister
for agriculture



What has “breaking the glass ceiling” in agriculture meant for you, and how have you navigated spaces where women are under-represented?
Rural women have been breaking glass ceilings for decades by proving they’re capable of anything they put their minds to and I back them all the way. In recent times, I’ve seen more women entering male-dominated fields, bringing value and expertise. But while more women are stepping into leadership positions, they’re still underrepresented compared to their male counterparts, which is something I’m focused on improving. Building a support network and finding a mentor can make all the difference.

Can you share the turning points or experiences that most shaped your journey into governance and leadership?
One key turning point was realising that bias—both conscious and unconscious—was still alive and well when I stood for Parliament in 2020. I spent some time reflecting on my earlier career and realised there are many barriers women face throughout their careers - but by being visible, vocal, and determined - you can create pathways for yourself, and others. I believe we all need to take inspiration from others who have walked the talk, so my journey has always been shaped by my great-grandmother Mary Grigg, National’s first female MP. She was a brilliant example of what it means to fight fiercely for women, farming, and rural communities. Her legacy lives on in many of the decisions I make and the positions I take.

What obstacles have you faced in your career, and how did you overcome them to reach the role you hold today?
Early in my career, I mistook criticism as ‘part of the job’ rather than a systemic issue. I’ve faced everything from offhanded comments about my appearance and intelligence, to being interrupted at a campaign event I was hosting by a man telling the crowd to ‘vote for a man this time’. I overcame these moments by finding strength in my purpose—representing rural families—and using my voice to drive meaningful change, not just for me, but for all women. My advice is to prove the critics wrong and never give up.

How do you think more women can be encouraged into decision-making and leadership roles across agriculture?
We need to build the pipeline of future leaders by nurturing talent early, connecting women to networks, and making leadership positions attainable — both in perception and in practice. But equally, we must shift the culture — because this isn’t just a women’s issue, it’s a societal one, and everyone has a role to play.

What changes do you hope to see over the next decade for women in leadership, and what role will women play in shaping the future of our food and fibre sector?
Over the next decade, I want to see more women not just at the table, but at the head of it — shaping strategy, innovation, and the growth of our food and fibre industries. Their perspective is vital to building a thriving, resilient agricultural sector.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?
Inspirational, resourceful, and unstoppable.



Anthea Rolfe
North Canterbury
dairy farmer

We chat to North Canterbury dairy farmer and founder of Females in Farming, Anthea Rolfe.

What first drew you to farming, and what keeps you passionate about working on the land?
Honestly, the cows got me. I fell for the routine of dairy life — the early starts, that hum in the shed when everything flows. Eighteen seasons later, I’m still here because I get a kick from seeing how the small, smart changes make a huge difference: calmer cows = fewer dramas in the herd. I love that what I do with my hands and my head actually matters. These days I’m leaning into hoof health and cow comfort — I’ve completed the 5-day Advanced Hoof Trimming course through Dairy Hoofcare Institute NZ — and I’m obsessed with how good handling, tidy tracks, water space and time budgets turn madness into calm. That’s the buzz for me.

What has it been like farming in a sector still often seen as male-dominated?
I turn up, I do the work and I let the herd do the talking. I don’t need a title to do my job — cows read energy better than job descriptions. Sure, there’ve been moments of being second-guessed (or handed gear that doesn’t fit) but I learned to back myself (the hard way!), bring calm into the

shed and ask for the right tools. Females in Farming started because I was sick of women feeling invisible on farm. We’re proving, quietly and daily, that capability isn’t gendered — it’s practice and good stock sense.

What are some of the biggest challenges you’ve faced on farm as a woman, and how have you pushed through them?
Strength, sizing and the “are you sure you can lift that?” vibe used to rattle me. I fixed what I could control: better systems, better vibes in shed, better training. I learned to move cows at cow pace, not mine; to use body position, not volume; and to treat my energy like infrastructure — when I’m calm, the whole herd calms down. Upskilling has been huge too: hoof trimming, lameness prevention, reading stress before it hits the vat (or doesn’t). And I’m not shy about asking for help when it saves a cow — or my back. Coffee helps, a good headband helps as do decent leggings with pockets help... but mostly it’s giving myself permission to pause, reset and go again.

Who or what has inspired you most in your farming journey, and how do you support other women coming through?

Old-school stock handlers who could read a cow from fifty metres — that quiet, competent kind — have always been my blueprint. And the rural women who keep the whole show running while no one is looking? That’s my fuel. I pay it forward by sharing what works in plain English: checklists, quick wins, calm-handling tips and the “why” behind them. That’s what my Polished FarmHer community is about — bite-sized, NZ-real tools you can use tomorrow morning — and Females in Farming gives women permission to feel good while they’re doing bloody hard work. I celebrate women’s wins loudly, I turn hard lessons into shortcuts for others and I make sure no FarmHer feels like she has to do this alone.

What changes would you like to see for women at the grassroots of agriculture in the years ahead?

More women becoming confident on farm and owning their power. Rosters that respect school runs and life’s reality. Training that’s short, practical and on-farm — not a day lost to theory you’ll never use. I want gear built for women as standard, not special order. And I want every farm team to understand that calm handling, time budgeting and good infrastructure aren’t “nice to haves” — they protect animal welfare, people and profit. When women’s voices are in those decisions from the start, everyone wins: cows, crews and bottom lines.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?
Tough. Clever. Unstoppable.

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What first drew you to farming, and what keeps you passionate about working on the land?

Farming is in my genes and I'm passionate about it. The main thing that I love is progress. Seeing a tangible difference in breeding better genetics year on year, seeing progress in pastures, fences, genuine environmental progress, young people coming through the sector etc. I couldn't do a job where you aren't making a tangible positive difference everyday. I love the mantra that farmers are guardians of the land, that really resonates with me.

When I left school I looked at either going to Lincoln to do an agriculture degree or training as a lawyer. My older sister was already at law school so I thought I should do something different, so I chose agriculture as it involved people, animals, science and commerce, so a great mix. I'm not sure I would have made it as a lawyer anyway as I have a very low tolerance of people that I don't align or agree with, so it could have been a very short career!

What has it been like farming in a sector still often seen as male-dominated?

I have actually never given any thought to the male dominated sector issue as I don't think it is an issue. My first boss Donald McKenzie from the Hakataramea valley said on my first day that he employed female shepherds because they worked just as hard as their male counterparts but didn't break machinery! I was one of only two female shepherds in the Te Anau basin when I then went and worked for Landcorp during my time at University for a one-year work placement and that wasn't an issue that I even thought about. It was the same when I worked for Ravensdown after graduating, there were only five female field reps in the country, not an issue. I was the first female to join the local volunteer fire brigade at that same time and again it wasn't an issue. It's only an issue if you make it one, and the males that I worked alongside never did. The world has now moved on and I think the spotlight on diversity has actually done us a disservice, I'm all for the best person for the job regardless of their demographics. I do really like the way that males look at issues in a very black and white manner, ie see a problem and fix it and then onto the next thing, no looking back and I guess in a way that initially made the sector more attractive to an action-based person. I'm pretty impatient and so I like a fast-moving get in and get things done type of industry, and farming is exactly that; timing is everything and the best farmers are those who spend time looking at the options to solve a problem, but then move fast to fix it. I'm not one for re-arranging the deckchairs and ruminating on things, just get stuck in.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced on farm as a woman, and how have you pushed through them?

The same challenges that the males I have worked alongside have faced! Droughts, doubts and debt! I guess the only thing that I have had to juggle perhaps more so than my male counterparts is juggling having a family whilst trying to be totally immersed in your business both practically and admin wise, ie being everything to everyone. I think this has made our three children very adaptable as they have just had to come along for the ride with me, and I see many female farmers doing this every single day out there. The only time I curse "women's liberation" is at tailing and shearing time when I am doing all of the food catering and still also working in the shearing and tailing gangs fulltime, that certainly takes a lot of multi-tasking, but it's a decision that I have made myself as I want to be involved in the practical side of farming and still cover off all of my other jobs, of which one of the most important is feeding the team!



Jane Smith
North Otago farmer

Who or what has inspired you most in your farming journey, and how do you support other women coming through?

All of those around me growing up, including my Mum during the tough 80s and 90s when farming was a heartbreaking sector to be in, especially when you are trying to hold a family and your community together at the same time.

I'm not a person that you will see at 'womens only' events but I fully support those that run these organisations and courses in order to give women in the industry strength, confidence and fellowship. Women are now leading the sector alongside males, not just in a supporting role. However they still also play a crucial support role in behind the scenes at the same time in their community and for their families.

What changes would you like to see for women at the grassroots of agriculture in the years ahead?

I am not one that buys into pay gaps or gender

gaps, I think it is important for women and men to be treated equally. So I could never be described as a feminist, but I really like strong women putting themselves forward for roles just because they are the best person for the job, regardless of gender. I think we are in a great space in terms of the role that women play in our society and our farming sector, so I think we should just carry on the trajectory that we are on. I do think men have been a bit isolated out over the past few years so a balanced view on gender going forward would be good.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

I have a saying that sums up rural women "If you think my hands are full, you should see my heart"

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Emma Higgins
Rabobank's Senior
Agriculture Analyst

Emma Higgins is Rabobank's Senior Agriculture Analyst and leads RaboResearch's efforts to support New Zealand's rural and corporate businesses with impactful research and engagement in the dairy sector. She is also an active and National Member of Honour for Rural Women New Zealand.

What has "breaking the glass ceiling" in agriculture meant for you, and how have you navigated spaces where women are under-represented?

I wouldn't say I've personally shattered any glass ceilings — but I've certainly benefited from the incredible women who came before me and did. Thanks to their courage and persistence, I've been able to move through the space they created, encountering only a few lingering shards along the way.

Even today, I often find myself as the only woman in the room. When I stop and think about it, it's more frustrating than daunting. Over time, I've come to expect it, and it no longer surprises me. What I do notice, though, is when the gender balance shifts — when women are equally represented, or even outnumber men — it's a refreshing change, and the dynamic of conversation often shifts in meaningful ways.

Across more than a decade, I've observed that women tend to ask incredibly insightful and thoughtful questions — though often they wait until the end of a presentation to do so. I've also noticed, in myself and other senior women, how we've adapted our personalities to fit into male-dominated

environments.

Can you share the turning points or experiences that most shaped your journey into agribusiness and leadership?

Motherhood has fundamentally reshaped me — how I see myself, how I view the world, and how I spend my time (or more accurately, how little time I have for anything superfluous). It's challenged me to question narratives, set firmer boundaries, make intentional choices, and pursue outcomes that extend beyond my own immediate interests.

It's made me tougher. I no longer read the online comments sections on articles covering my views on agriculture. I don't have the time, nor the energy. I've come to realise that other people's opinions are none of my business. Besides, I've presented to senior leadership teams and attended board meetings while juggling in the background sick toddlers, school holidays, hungry kids, and teacher-only days. I reckon I'm fairly resilient these days.

It's taught me how to better connect. Because, to me, that's part of what leadership is — being able to genuinely connect with people from all walks of life.

It's helped me understand my value — as a person, a leader, and an employee — with greater clarity. I'm better for

it, and I believe it shows in how I show up across all the roles I hold.

It's this lived experience — as a working mother in agribusiness — that inspired me to start Tasman Rural Women. Our group of like-minded women is dedicated to connecting and supporting others across the Tasman and wider Nelson region. It's helped me grow my network and created a meaningful way to give back to the community.

What obstacles have you faced in your career, and how did you overcome them to reach the role you hold today?

One of my biggest challenges has been balancing motherhood with a visible, travel-heavy career alongside ambition and a desire for continued personal development.

None of my children were great sleepers — one especially tricky — and showing up to deliver presentations to very senior people, recall data, and engage confidently while running on fumes has tested me deeply. There have been stretches over the past seven years where I've thought, "I can't do this anymore." But somehow, you keep going. You keep showing up.

I'm constantly making trade-offs: do I catch the early flight home to see my kids before bed, or stay for networking? Do I power through my to-do list to get home sooner, or invest time in career-building conversations?

What's made my career possible is the unwavering support of my family. I truly believe the partner a woman chooses can make or break her career — and my husband has been my greatest enabler. He travels more than I do, so we rely on a village to raise our children. In our case, that village has included paid daycare and the incredible support of my parents and in-laws. Moving back to Nelson was a deliberate choice to be closer to them — and they've stepped in countless times, like when my mum took my son to school on his first day because I had a board meeting. I also have an incredibly supportive, flexible workplace. Cumulatively, these are all the privileged factors that have enabled me to stay working full-time.

How do you think more women can be encouraged into decision-making and leadership roles across agriculture?

I don't believe it's about encouraging women to step into bigger roles. I reckon the ambition and capability are absolutely already there. What's missing is a system that genuinely supports them, especially working mothers. The years when women are ready to step into leadership often coincide with intense family responsibilities. Without structural support — like flexible work, inclusive leadership, access to networks, and manager backing — many are stretched too thin to stay the course.

Ultimately, I strongly believe it's not about fixing women. It's about fixing the system so women can both lead and thrive.

What changes do you hope to see over the next decade for women in agribusiness, and what role will women play in shaping the future of our food and fibre sector?

I'm expecting to see more brilliant women CEOs to lead our big co-ops — and yes, I track it in a spreadsheet. One day, I hope that list of female execs will need a second tab.

In the next decade, data-driven farming will be as essential as turning pasture into protein — and women will be at the heart of it. Real-time decisions, smarter systems, and increased female leadership will shape the agri-future. (With the right structural support, of course!)

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

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Cheyenne Wilson
Southland farmer

Cheyenne Wilson, Southland farmer and passionate voice for women and Māori in agriculture.

What first drew you to farming, and what keeps you passionate about working on the land?

I grew up in a small rural town called Ohai in western Southland. My whānau have always been connected to farming one way or another. My grandad was a farmer, and my koro and nan lived closely with the whenua. My parents met in the shearing sheds, and Dad later began farming himself. My siblings and I were always alongside him on farm every weekend and school holidays. That upbringing grounded me in farming and gave me a real sense of belonging. I started forging my own path in the industry after I left school, first starting in the shearing sheds before turning my hand to dairy farming.

What has it been like farming in a sector still often seen as male-dominated?

There were times when I had to work hard to be taken seriously, but in recent years I have noticed the industry shifting to more women representation. I have been fortunate to work for people who saw

the value of women on farm. They would often say their female staff were more caring, compassionate, and kinder on gear, qualities that make a real difference.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced on farm as a woman, and how have you pushed through them?

One challenge has been assumptions. People often presumed the male staff member was the manager simply because he was male. I used to find it funny when they had to walk back and apologise once they realised I was the manager. I also once thought physical strength would hold me back, but I soon learned that women often work smarter, not just harder. At times, imposter syndrome had been my biggest enemy, and I think that is a challenge many women sometimes quietly face.

Who or what has inspired you most in your farming journey, and how do you support other women coming through?

I grew up surrounded by strong wahine, especially in the sheds, who taught me so much and had endless patience while I was learning. My friends and whānau continue to inspire me. Seeing them work hard in the industry while supporting others motivates me too. I try to give that back by always making myself available to women with questions about the sector. I mentor women through Primary ITO and will be speaking at the Inspiring Women's Conference in Gore next month. I have appreciated seeing many women making themselves available for board roles, putting their hands up to represent their communities. I have been fortunate to meet many inspiring women and sit alongside many around the board table. Siobhan O'Malley is one of those women, her ability to create meaningful change and impact in the industry, she is a co-founder of Meet the Need which is a charity I have been privileged to have been involved with since it launched in 2020. She also founded Hemprino alongside her Kellogg friends and alongside her husband Christopher has pathed a path for her whānau in dairy farming. I have many wahine toa who I look up to and am fortunate to know and be able to reach out to and connect with.

What changes would you like to see for women at the grassroots of agriculture in the years ahead?

I would like to see more women continue to get around decision making tables, and more diversity in general. Representation matters, and when different perspectives are valued, the whole industry benefits.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

Passionate, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga.

What has "breaking the glass ceiling" in agriculture meant for you, and how have you navigated spaces where women are under-represented?

Breaking the glass ceiling is an interesting term. I haven't felt I have done that as there are so many trailblazers who have come before me. I made a decision many years ago that if I see somewhere there is a need for diversity of thought to benefit our rural communities, then I would do my best to get involved. There are so many areas where women are under-represented, although I do see change happening with more and more men understanding that women bring a different voice to discussions and should be included and valued. It wasn't easy and still isn't, although I always refer to my values and touch base with my personal champions when navigating these spaces gets a tad challenging.

Can you share the turning points or experiences that most shaped your journey into governance and leadership?

I remember working in a local bank as a relationship manager when I moved to the farm. On Thursdays the male managers went and played golf to network while the women managers stayed behind and worked. This infuriated me as I had not experienced this before in other countries in my senior banking career. I vowed then I would work in the future for women to be included in networking and conversations that affected them and their work. I never really considered myself a leader, I am someone who supports and lifts others up, and mucks in to get things done. It was the support of other women around NZ that believed in me and encouraged me to recognise and own my leadership strengths that led me into the area of governance.

What obstacles have you faced in your career, and how did you overcome them to reach the role you hold today?

I have had a couple of times when I missed out on being voted onto industry boards, which knocked my confidence a great deal. At times the dreaded imposter syndrome knocked on my door (like it does everyone's), usually after these setbacks and when there has been personal and work stress that collide. I have found that so many people have been supportive of me during different stages in my career, those that believed in me already, and those that when they got to know me became my champion as well. I tend to lean on these people, my people, that support me but are also very honest with me and get me back on track. Recognising where my circle of control sits helps me overcome obstacles and rebuilds by resilience reserves again.



Sandra Matthews
Rural Women New Zealand national president

How do you think more women can be encouraged into decision-making and leadership roles across agriculture?

It is up to us as leaders to encourage and support other women, of all ages and stages. Taking the first step on an AWDT personal confidence building programme is valuable, it helps to build a network and to find those women who could become your 'tribe'. Attend a Rural Women NZ local event and talk to other women at these, put yourself out of your comfort zone and go to something local and learn about what roles you can start with in your own community. I encourage others by connecting and saying "hey, X is on how about going?" Making decisions in leadership roles is sometimes not easy, but when connecting with others who have kind words of support will help build their confidence to 'give it a go'. I have been encouraged by some amazing women who gave me their time, so my mantra is "pay it forward".

What changes do you hope to see over the next decade for women in leadership, and what role will women play in shaping the future of our food and fibre sector?

I hope to see women who are growing in their leadership confidence put their hands up and be given the opportunity to lead in a way that may be different to how it was done in the past. The ones who are a bit quieter be encouraged to take the step and know those already in senior roles are supporting them and being their champions. Women are the future of our industry, but I see it is a partnership of both women and men of all ages and stages who can learn from each other, support growth in each other, and this is what will shape our exciting food and fibre sector future.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

Strong, connected and determined.

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What first drew you to a career in the rural sector, and what keeps you passionate about working with farmers and the land?

I was fortunate to grow up on a sheep and beef farm in Le Bons Bay on Banks Peninsula, and those early years gave me a deep connection to the land and the people who care for it. Farm life teaches you lessons early - resilience when things don't go to plan, humility in the face of weather you can't control, and respect for people who get up every day and do it all again. That connection to the land and it's people has stayed with me, and it naturally pulled me back into agriculture as a career.

What inspires me most about the rural sector is the calibre of its people. Farmers are some of the hardest-working and most grounded individuals you'll ever meet, and I hold immense respect for that work ethic. Having benefited from a strong education, I see it as both a responsibility and a privilege to apply that knowledge in a way that supports farmers. I am motivated to contribute meaningfully to their businesses - helping them make decisions that not only lift sustainable productivity today but also safeguard their land and businesses for tomorrow.

It's humbling to be part of an industry that quite literally feeds the world. To know that the work I do, even in a small way, helps farmers succeed and ensures food on people's tables - that's what keeps me passionate. Agriculture is more than a job; it's a purpose, and I feel incredibly fortunate to play a role in it.

How have you found building a career in agribusiness, an area still often seen as male-dominated?

Building a career in agribusiness has been both rewarding and at times intimidating stepping into a space that is male dominated. I've focused on building credibility through science, productivity, and backing myself, and learning from the people around me - both male and female.

Ravensdown has an incredible depth of knowledge and I've taken every opportunity to learn from colleagues across the business.

The agricultural sector has come a long way over the last 5-10 years in terms of female representation, and is only getting better. It's exciting to be part of that change to show that women can thrive and lead in agribusiness.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced as a woman working in the rural sector, and how have you navigated them?

As women, I think we naturally carry the weight of caring deeply about the people and the world around us. For me, that has often shown up as overthinking - lying awake at night wondering, Did I say the right thing? Did I offend anyone? Was that good enough? It comes from a place of wanting to do well and not let anyone down, but I've realised how much energy can be lost in that cycle.

I'll never forget listening to Emma Poole's acceptance speech when she became the first female winner of the FMG Young Farmer of the Year in 2023. She said that often a woman's biggest obstacle is herself, and she's right. I can think of countless times when I've almost talked myself out of an opportunity, not because I wasn't capable, but because I was worried about how it might be perceived.

The beauty of this challenge is that it can also be your biggest asset. That tendency to reflect deeply, hold ourselves to account and want to improve, are the same qualities that drive excellence. The key is learning to channel that reflection in a constructive way. Instead of asking, Was I good enough? I've learned to ask, How could I do that better next time? What can I learn from this? How do I take it one step further? When we reframe self-doubt into self-improvement, it shifts from being a barrier to being a powerful asset. And that's when



Demelza Dalglish
Ravensdown South Island
sales manager

we stop holding ourselves back and start leaning into the opportunities that allow us to thrive.

Who or what has inspired you most in your career, and how do you encourage or support other women entering rural professions?

I'm inspired by my parents and family to make them proud, and my fiancé Jack who has been my strongest supporter. I wouldn't be where I am today without him.

Academically I owe a lot to Professor Derrick Moot at Lincoln University, who told me in my third year of my Bachelor of Agricultural Science when I asked him to be my Honours Professor that unless I came back to him with proof of some A grades, I wasn't worth his time. He said it in much nicer words I'm sure, but this was the first of many lessons he would teach me in the years that followed. The determination I built under his guidance to do the very best I could academically carried on through my career with Ravensdown. Unfortunately for him, his job was never done even after I graduated, as I still drop in from time to time when I need pragmatic advice.

I'm trying to support women into agriculture by showing them how it can be done - representation at the top. When I first started at Ravensdown five and a half years ago there were no women in sales leadership roles above the Senior Agri Manager position. I hope to be the reason someone thinks hard about a career in agriculture, and even better still, in leadership.

What changes would you like to see for women in rural professional roles in the years ahead?

I hope to see women build confidence to back themselves and pursue opportunities without hesitation.

I'd like to see the agricultural sector normalise women in all roles, with emphasis on leadership and decision-making roles, not just support or administrative positions. Achieving this will require greater flexibility in the workplace, so women can progress their career while balancing family and other responsibilities.

Rural Women: If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

Underestimated, resilient, pivotal.

What has "breaking the glass ceiling" in agriculture meant for you, and how have you navigated spaces where women are under-represented?

I loved it when Emma Poole made history as the first female winner of the FMG Young Farmer of the Year and spoke of "breaking the grass ceiling." What a statement and what an impact. We are fortunate now to have women stepping up across the primary sector—in boardrooms, government, and communities. Women have always been there, but traditionally in supportive roles. I'm delighted that our feminine voices are now being heard in discussions and debates.

"You can't be what you can't see" rings true. Young women now have plenty of inspiring leaders to observe and learn from. Still, I'm often contacted by women struggling to find a place. I tell them: start in the community—Board of Trustees, Catchment Groups, Federated Farmers. However, leaders must be deliberate in seeking out female voices if they're absent at the table.

Organisations like AWDT and Rural Leaders have had a huge impact, building confidence and capability. The AWDT Escalator Programme was a game-changer for me, strengthening networks and cementing my commitment to making a positive impact.

I grew up around boys and worked in male-dominated spaces most of my career, so I'm comfortable here. Still, being part of a team where more than one feminine leadership style is represented is refreshing and leads to better outcomes.

Can you share the turning points or experiences that most shaped your journey into governance and leadership?

I distinctly remember James Parsons saying, "success occurs when opportunity meets preparation." That resonated with me, as I had invested years in preparedness, waiting for the chance to make an impact. My opportunity came with a pea weevil biosecurity incursion in the Wairarapa, where I was appointed grower representative on the MPI Governance Group. It was challenging and lonely but shaped my leadership and reminded me that right decisions are rarely the easy ones.

That experience opened doors to the Federated Farmers National Board, where I served four years as National Arable Chair and later National Vice President. These roles allowed me to advocate for farmers, build government and media relationships, and contribute to rural communities.

Winning the Ballance Farm Environment Awards for the Wellington Region was another turning point. It connected me with like-minded farmers passionate about social, economic, and environmental outcomes. I remain a trustee of the NZ Farm Environment Trust, which oversees the awards programme.

After Feds, I sought corporate experience with FMG, whose vision is "growing strong and prosperous rural communities." I'm proud of FMG's work, not only through insurance but also Farmstrong's wellbeing programme. When the IrrigationNZ CEO role came up, I felt my advocacy, governance, and industry background could help shape the future of water use in New Zealand.

What obstacles have you faced in your career, and how did you overcome them to reach the role you hold today?

As a leader, you learn challenges are part of the role, though some days you question your capability and capacity.

The pea weevil incursion was a standout challenge, especially recommending a four-year growing ban on a lucrative crop affecting friends, family, and ourselves. But we believed in eradication and fought to support growers. A key learning was the value of networks built during "peacetime."



Karen Williams
CEO of IrrigationNZ

My time on the Federated Farmers Board included COVID lockdowns, East Coast drought, Mycoplasma Bovis, and widespread policy dissatisfaction. It was frustrating when we couldn't deliver everything members demanded, but I knew I gave all I could to support positive outcomes.

Today my challenge is achieving a more strategic approach to freshwater management. Water security underpins wellbeing and our food and fibre exports. As I write from Vancouver, I've just seen NZ lamb proudly offered in Whole Foods, after touring US states where long-term water investment drives reliable food production and community benefits.

How do you think more women can be encouraged into decision-making and leadership roles across agriculture?

I'm excited about leadership opportunities for women. We're seeing dominant numbers heading into tertiary study in food and fibre, and from a vocational perspective, the rise in young female shepherds is particularly encouraging. I smile when male friends rave about their new female shepherd — it shouldn't surprise them!

As gender balance improves, leadership will follow. But both men and women must champion women's capability. I was fortunate that Guy Wigley, the outgoing National Arable Chair, encouraged me to step into his role. I was capable, but his support built the wider confidence I needed.

What changes do you hope to see over the next decade for women in leadership, and what role will women play in shaping the future of our food and fibre sector?

While women are increasingly leading ag organisations, there's still room for more gender balance. Governors need to deliberately consider and promote women's skills, not just tick boxes. Representation must be valued for contribution, not tokenism.

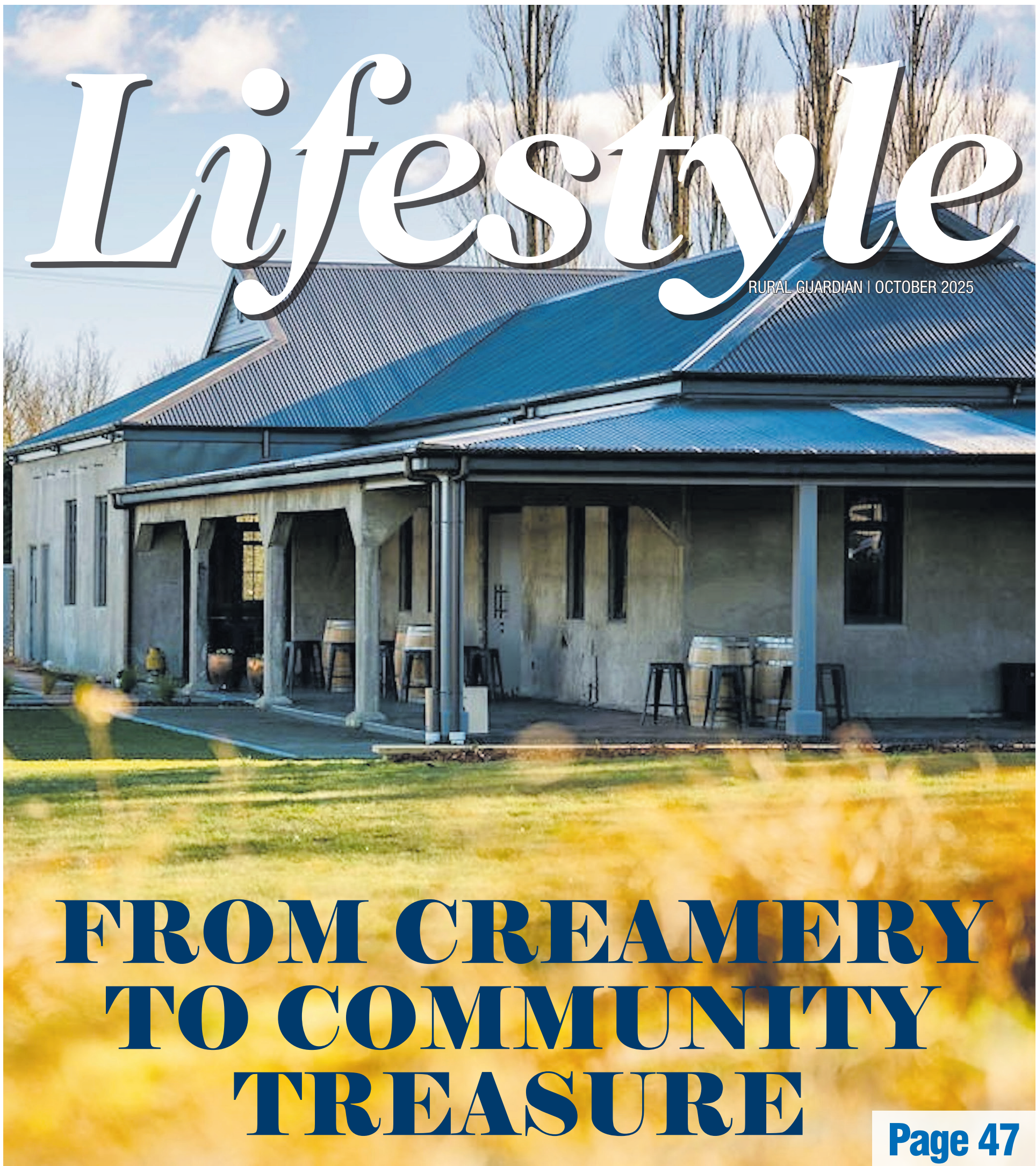
I worry about the increasing responsibilities rural women shoulder — caregiving, off-farm income, farm management — all balanced until a curveball like illness or weather disruption tips the scales. Rural Support Trust plays a vital role here, but so must communities, supporting leaders in tough times.

If you had to describe rural women in three words, what would they be?

I don't think three words can capture rural women's commitment to family, community, farms, and careers — but my best effort is:

Passionate — hardworking — selfless.

To me, rural women are the glue that holds communities together. Perhaps the better word is "anchors" of rural life.



Lifestyle

RURAL GUARDIAN | OCTOBER 2025

FROM CREAMERY TO COMMUNITY TREASURE

Page 47



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If these walls could talk: a new chapter for Rotherham's old hospital



With long polished wood hallways and eight bedrooms, the hospital has plenty of space for guests. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



A living room was once a nursery with a sunlit space for jaundiced babies. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



Claire Inkson

RURAL
EDITOR



The McGregors have found plenty of historical artifacts during their renovations. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Nine months after turning the key on Rotherham's landmark former Amuri Hospital, Sarah and Michael McGregor are still uncovering the building's character — sometimes under coats of paint.

"The whole place was whitewashed, hiding a multitude of sins. We found purple skirting boards, a black room, orange paint over lino, but we also found original doors and historical lamps tucked away," Sarah says.

The property, which the couple have renamed Amuri Manor, was on the market for five years, and buying it was a long-held dream of Sarah's.

"We'd been looking for a place of peace, respite and retreat."

With eight bedrooms, seven toilets and five showers — not to mention two hectares of grounds — the McGregors have their work cut out bringing the building back to life.

They are carefully restoring detail, room by room, with an eye on both hospitality and history, but it has its challenges.

Borer had well and truly made itself at home, and the boiler — which should have kept the large building toasty — has recently given up the ghost.

A new log burner has kept the winter chill at bay, but concrete walls have potentially thwarted Sarah's wallpapering plans.

"When you have a 20-degree nor'west day, every single wall in this building weeps with condensation because the concrete's colder than the air."

Still, they are determined to press on and have already made extensive renovations, all in keeping with history.

"We're going back to 1922," Sarah says, "honouring the original plan."

The building has long captured the curiosity of the Hurunui District.

The Amuri Hospital was decommissioned from service in the 1960s and became a private residence, its doors often firmly closed to the public.

The property harks back to a time when healthcare was much more accessible to rural communities, with the Waikari Hospital also just a half-hour drive away.

Rotherham's hospital emerged from a post-WWI push to provide local maternity and medical care across North Canterbury's rural districts.

Built in the early 1920s from robust concrete, it soon became a lifeline for the Amuri basin — handling maternity cases, farm accidents and convalescence — at a time when bridges, roads and ambulance services were sparse.

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Sarah McGregor (left) and husband Michael were drawn to the peace and tranquillity of the building. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Through the 1930s and beyond, it dealt with everyday emergencies and celebrated everyday miracles.

In 1933, the celebrated aviator Aroha Clifford died here days after childbirth — one of many stories that tie the hospital to wider New Zealand history.

It nearly faced closure in the 1930s, with the North Canterbury Hospital Board deeming the facility too close to its wooden Waikari cousin, but locals fought to keep it open — and so it remained for another three decades.

Despite being a private residence under many different owners since the 1960s, elements of the building's medical past remain.

An old fumigation room survives — once used to purify linen with sulphur — and vast windows in the nursery speak to a practice of settling babies in the sun to ward off jaundice.

A large skylight, in what is now an office, provided light for surgery and deliveries in the days before electricity.

The old morgue attached to an outside shed recalls more sombre times at the hospital. The couple intend to honour those people — including babies — whose outcomes were not happy ones, acknowledging how attitudes to infant loss have changed.

"We are going to be doing a Memorial Garden for the hospital, somewhere people can sit and remember."

A building with such a history could easily invite a few ghost stories — but Sarah says any

unwanted ghoulish guests have been keeping a low profile.

"They can stay if they want to — as long as they don't cause any trouble," she jokes.

A working vision: pay it forward

Income from Airbnb will underpin a koha/pay-it-forward arm: free or subsidised nights for carers who need respite, community leaders, creatives in residence — even weekend masterclasses where singers can "belt it out" without disturbing neighbours.

And the plan includes re-starting a community tradition:

"We will reinstate the hospital fete."

While the property is, above all else, the McGregors' home, they are open to engaging with the Amuri community, understand the connection locals feel to the place, and say they consider themselves custodians of the landmark.

"People have seen the grounds improve, we're bringing some love back to the space," Sarah says.

Community call-out: Help us tell Amuri Hospital's story

Were you born here — or did a family member work, recover, or volunteer at the old Rotherham/Amuri Hospital? Do you have photos, admission cards, mementos, or stories about nurses, matrons, the wards, or the hospital fetes?

Please share your memories by emailing claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz.



The old hospital was originally opened in 1922. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



A historic photo of the hospital.

PHOTO SUPPLIED



Nursing staff stand in the hospital grounds. PHOTO SUPPLIED



The restoration process has revealed plenty of secrets beneath the carpets and paint. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Shimmy Shaw's Viral Beef & Kūmara Bowl with Hot Honey, Cottage Cheese & Avocado

Shimmy Fit founder Shimmy Shaw.



Personal trainer and founder of Shimmy Fit, Shimmy Shaw, shares her recipe for the viral beef protein bowl that has become a sensation on Tik Tok.

Ingredients (serves 1–2):

- 150 g beef mince (ground beef)
- 12 gm taco seasoning
- 1 medium kūmara (orange, gold, or purple), peeled and diced into cubes
- 50gm lite cottage cheese
- 40gm avocado, sliced
- 10gm Hot honey (SpicyBoys, or make by warming 2 Tbsp honey with ½–1 tsp chilli flakes or hot sauce)
- ½ tsp Olive oil or butter for cooking

Method:

- 1. Roast the kūmara** — Toss the cubes with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast at 200 °C for 20–25 minutes until tender and caramelised, or steam/boil if you prefer soft.
- 2. Cook the beef** — Heat oil in a pan, and brown beef. Mix 1/4 cup of water with taco seasoning and pour into a pan with beef. Simmer for a few minutes until water has evaporated and beef is cooked through.
- 3. Assemble the bowl** — Add kūmara as the base, then top with cottage cheese. Spoon over the beef and arrange avocado slices.
- 4. Finish** — Drizzle generously with hot honey.

Extra idea: if you mash the kūmara lightly with a fork, it makes a creamy base similar to mashed potatoes, which works really well with the hot honey.

Follow Shimmy at www.shimmy.fit



Shimmy Shaws viral beef protein bowl

The importance of Co Enzyme Q10

I regularly have contact from readers about CoQ10, especially from those wanting help with the side effects of statin cholesterol lowering medication. CoQ10 moves high energy electrons within our cell mitochondria where energy is made. CoQ10 collects these electrons and moves them to an enzyme called ATP synthase to make the energy we need.

Studies show that statins can reduce circulating CoQ10 by as much as 50%. The side effects are so common they are diagnosable diseases called Statin Myopathy and Statin Neuropathy. The main side effects are muscle and tendon pain. Muscles and nerves have huge energy requirements and reducing CoQ10 can have devastating effects on muscles and nerves.

Reductions in CoQ10 can affect mood, memory and general cognitive function. In most cases 2 months of a naturally fermented CoQ10 will improve muscle and brain function and allow people to better tolerate the medication.



I recommend CoQ10 for several reasons most commonly for statin support. I also add CoQ10 for those fatigued without medical causes and for those with cardiovascular, autoimmune and neurodegenerative problems. For example, I include at least 200mg for those with Polymyalgia Rheumatica and higher doses for those with MS. For statin support I use a high-quality naturally fermented CoQ10 and for autoimmune or neurodegenerative support, a mitochondrial support formula that includes high grade CoQ10 with several energy co-factors. The first improvement felt by those with these conditions is usually a lift in energy and general well-being. Those with autoimmune or neurodegenerative problems should be working to a personalised diet and supplement plan complementary to their regular medical treatment. Most people feel a real difference within 3 months.

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. Join his all new newsletter at www.abundant.co.nz.

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Recalibrate your happiness

KATHRYN WRIGHT

“I just want to be happy.”
Something I hear on an almost daily basis, in my personal and professional roles. It’s also something everybody wants for their children – and with good reason. Why would we not? Being happy has become the holy grail of wellness, a sign of excellent mental health, and the panacea to all of life’s ills. It’s also a message we constantly see everywhere: movies, TV, framed wall art, clothing, social media, and just our culture in general. Think: Don’t worry, be happy; Good vibes only; Happy, happy, happy, etc.

But what if that was setting us up for failure? What if our ideas about how we “should” feel on a daily basis was so unobtainable that literally every single day we failed to meet that target, so then we jump to assuming that there’s something wrong with us? It’s more common than you might think.

Generally, the yardstick of feeling joyful, and having an endlessly exciting and completely fulfilling life, is a common one. This is partly due to seeing friends and acquaintances on social media showcasing their life highlights which gives us the impression that everyone else leads an exciting life, while you are stuck at home in an unfulfilled life. It’s easy to forget that whatever you are seeing is probably a highly staged, minor part of their lives – the

posts are never of them making a cheese toastie, or arguing with their children, or cleaning out the cutlery drawer, are they?

The truth is that as humans, we possess about 84 different emotions. We can’t just feel happiness 24/7. It is normal to feel sorrow, grief, guilt, worry or resentment – these are a part of the human experience and are a normal part of being alive. They also have important message for us about what we may need to change in our life situation that

isn’t serving us.

Rather than constantly aiming high for continual happiness, can you connect with what makes you feel contentment? What about satisfaction or fulfilment? Of course, happiness and joy will show up too, but they are such a small part of our lives that constantly chasing them can be a little like getting into a tug of war with a monster. Drop the struggle. Only when you do this, will it free up the capacity and ability to let you connect with what matters to

you.

I realise this might sound like bad news for some. Like a bubble bursting. You may think back to times as a teen or child when it seemed like you felt this elusive happiness all the time, so why wouldn’t you want to get back there? The thing is that we tend to have selective memories and romanticise the past – otherwise known as “euphoric recall”. The truth is that while we do have good memories of those times, there were also really awkward, difficult

moments when we were young that our minds conveniently buffer out. We felt difficult emotions then too.

Resetting your expectations around how much we should be feeling pure happiness will, believe it or not, free you up to focus on the things that will ultimately lead to contentment and fulfilment, and it’s totally worth the trade-off.

Kathryn Wright is a registered counsellor specialising in rural mental health.
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Staveley Co-op 1916: Where heritage meets 'Happily Ever After'

CLAIRE INKSON

After the Canterbury earthquakes, Kathy Harrington-Watt and her family went looking for a weekend escape and, in 2011, found a little cottage with a big surprise attached: the historic Staveley Co-operative Dairy Factory, built in 1916.

Saved from the ravages of time and reimagined as an event venue, the building has a new lease of life.

"We didn't buy the property for the building, but we wondered at the time if we could do something with it," Kathy says.

Peeling back history

What followed was a careful restoration that has returned a piece of Mid Canterbury history to community life.

A structural engineer first confirmed the bones were sound; a heritage architect then advised stripping the ramshackle lean-tos to "see what we've got."

What emerged was a charming concrete landmark, with its original trusses cleaned and

retained, its roof tied back into the structure, and discreet earthquake strengthening threaded through.

In a nod to history, the venue's bar is clad with the lids of hundreds of vintage honey tins discovered when an old ceiling was pulled down.

"It was definitely a labour of love," Kathy says. "The history of the building needed to be at the fore. We wanted to keep it as raw as possible."

The factory began as a weatherboard creamery in 1907, then grew into a factory in 1916 as the Mid Canterbury dairy industry flourished.

"Farmers increased their herds, the co-op formed, and they built the larger factory."

"The walls are incredibly strong, made from local river sand and stone."

By the start of the 1930s, its dairy heyday was over, and the factory closed its doors in 1932, later becoming a honey processing plant.

Relaxed and rustic

Now open for weddings and

The setting for the Staveley co-op provides a stunning backdrop for weddings. PHOTO SUPPLIED



events, the building offers couples and groups the chance to become part of the Staveley Co-op story, and to create new ones wrapped in a sense of nostalgia.

"The heritage creates a sense of memory, and weddings are about becoming part of a family's history. Each celebration also extends the building's story. I think that's why people love rustic places with a story: they're creating one too."

With views to Mt Somers and the Southern Alps, the setting does the rest: rural, romantic and relaxed.

"Staveley is so beautiful. The factory building's setting felt perfect for events," Kathy says.

The venue is what is known as a "dry hire," but that doesn't mean guests can't enjoy a relaxed tippie.

Dry hire is about keeping a wedding simple and within budget, allowing couples creative control.

Couples bring their own caterers, beverages and styling, supported by a caterer's kitchen and bar space on site.

Capacity is set at a sweet spot of up to 120 seated guests.

Most importantly, the timeline breathes: access from Friday afternoon for set-up, a relaxed Saturday celebration (music off by 11 pm; guests away by 11.30 pm),

and a Sunday morning window to pack down.

"There's no rush," says Kathy. "Weddings should never feel pressured."

The venue is supported by nearby accommodation options, from local Airbnbs to the Staveley Scout Camp, and hotels in Mt Somers, Methven and Ashburton, with bus hire easy for guest shuttles.

Saved, strengthened and beautifully reimagined, Staveley Co-op 1916 offers couples the rare chance to begin a future inside a living past: exactly the kind of story worth saying "I do" to.



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Restoring Degraded Forests

Written by Emma Warmerdam, Technician for Verity NZ
based in Methven.

Sheep and beef farms contain nearly 17% of New Zealand's remaining native woody vegetation. Much of this vegetation is fragmented and vulnerable to ongoing damage by pests and livestock. These pressures are preventing native species from regenerating successfully and replacing older trees. If we don't protect these areas, they will continue to degrade and eventually disappear.

To date, there has not been a strong incentive for farmers to fence off these forest fragments. Fencing is expensive, native trees provide shelter for livestock, and retiring the land does not provide any economic benefits, but what if it could?

What if the forest fragments on your property could be protected and provide you with an alternative source of income?

What if a company paid for high-quality fencing, pest control, ongoing maintenance, and monitoring?

What if this allowed forests to thrive, increasing the biodiversity on your property, sequestering carbon, and earning you revenue from carbon credits?

That's what Verity NZ is here to help you achieve. We want to give farmers a way to protect their land in a way that makes sense. We offer a unique option that rewards landowners for native restoration on their land through the Voluntary Carbon Market. We can establish carbon projects on marginal farmland through reforestation and in degraded forests through forest restoration.

Verity NZ's forest restoration projects will allow landowners to earn carbon credit revenue from the new carbon sequestered. We take baseline measurements of the existing vegetation and soil carbon and then monitor the change in carbon stored over time.

Forest degradation is characterised by:

- A lack of understorey vegetation
- No regeneration to replace older trees
- Damage to tree roots, trunks, and branches
- Reduced canopy cover
- Loss of native species diversity
- Invasive species encroachment

Restoration activities that Verity NZ carries out to restore these areas include:

- Fencing to remove grazing pressure
- Animal pest control (e.g., deer and possums)
- Plant pest control
- Aerial seeding to reintroduce subclimax and climax species where needed

Research has shown that unfenced remnants of native forest under pressure from grazing are unlikely to survive in the long term. While grazed areas may contain significant seedling populations, they are often devoid of saplings. The understorey is bare, with no regenerating native species in sight. This means there is almost no replacement of existing canopy species.

If forest fragments remain unprotected and are continually visited by pests and livestock, the forest will transition into a stand of damaged, old trees, with no young plants to replace them, leading to the collapse of the forest fragment. This degradation leads to the loss of unique and important forest ecosystems.

In lowland environments, forest fragments are often all that remains of the vegetation that once blanketed New Zealand's landscape, due to the extensive historic land clearance. Healthy forest fragments serve as an important 'stepping stone' for native bird species across our now heavily modified landscapes. They also function as an important seed source, enabling further natural regeneration in the surrounding area.

Protecting the forest on your property from degradation has a multitude of benefits, beyond the carbon and biodiversity gains.

- They can act as windbreaks to shelter stock in nearby paddocks.
- Forest vegetation helps prevent soil erosion and maintain water quality.
- Forests can support native insects that may help pollinate nearby crops or control pests.

If this has got you interested, get in touch with our team in Methven for further information. The Voluntary Carbon Market is the perfect solution for farmers who want to implement native restoration projects to protect our unique biodiversity and steward the land for the future. Verity NZ is the genuine one-stop-shop, seed-to-credit company who will deliver for you.

Head over to Verity NZ's Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn to find out more and watch our new documentary, showcasing our restoration projects.



Damage to native vegetation due to ungulates.



Bare ground in a grazed kākūka stand.



The lack of understorey is evident in this grazed native forest.



A large kahikatea tree (*Dacrydium dacrydioides*) in an area of protected forest.