

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2014

Real Farmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

Thriving
in idyllic
isolation

Governance
courses get
farms on
track

The female
challenge

Leading the
pack, at pace

An eye for
good stock
pushes
production

Financial support
for the students in
your family

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ATS  **Ravensdown**

From the CEO

Welcome to the first edition of Real Farmer for 2014.



Third generation Upper Takaka farmers Corrigan Sowman and Ruth Guthrie feature in this edition of Real Farmer and talk about dairy farming in this unique part of the country, their links to Ruralco, and the benefits of being safety focused.

Newly appointed ATS director, Jessie Chandorman and her husband Hayden also share

their dairying story and practices. They work hard to combine leading genetics with long established principals to breed efficient, high producing cows for their Canterbury operation.

Other features include an in-depth look at the Dairy NZ Farm Business Governance Programme, set up to give large scale and rapidly growing dairy operators in the South Island a chance to hone in on governance skills. We also take a look at the hugely successful and popular ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge and the Spring Challenge—both events have been running for a similar length of time and both are attracting hundreds of people to experience the great outdoors and improve their fitness.

Our regular articles in this edition cover pneumonia in sheep and cattle and the significant threat to production through reduced live weight gains and increased mortality rates; the effect high somatic cell counts can have on your income event when they're below the penalty point threshold; and Ele Ludemann's take on dairy conversions.

There's plenty of informative reading on offer to suit everyone in this edition of Real Farmer, so take some time to sit down and take a closer look.

Neal Shaw, Group Chief Executive

Upcoming Events

Employers Workshop

11 February Culverden
12 February Ashburton
13 February South Canterbury
14 February South Canterbury/
North Otago

For more information on a workshop in your area, visit www.dairynz.co.nz/events.

Dairy Women's Network Morning Tea

10 February Ashburton
For more information visit www.dwn.co.nz/events.

Southern Field Days

12–14 February Waimumu
Ravensdown and Ruralco are attending

ATS Farm Safety Manual and Training

18 February Ashburton
18 March Ashburton
For more information visit www.ats.co.nz/farmsafety

Generate Certificate of Rural Leadership

25 February Geraldine
9 March Lincoln
For more information contact Lauren McWilliam on generate@taratahi.ac.nz

ECan Land/Water Regional Plan Farmer Briefing

17 February Ashburton
19 February Waimakariri
20 February Timaru
26 February Kaikoura
27 February Waihora

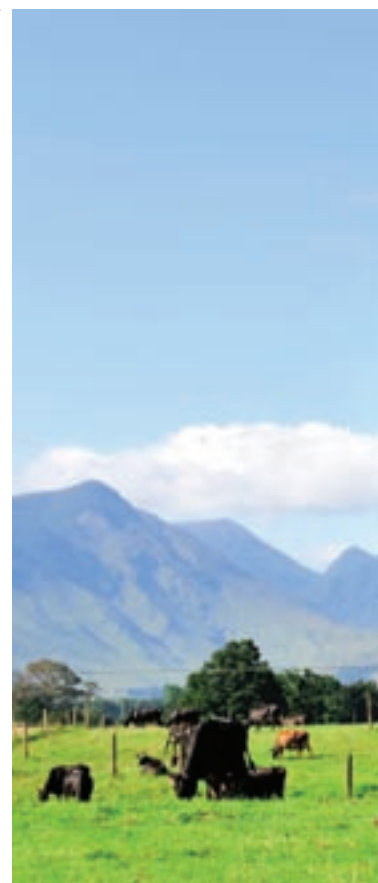
For more information contact Tony Fransen at tony.fransen@dairynz.co.nz.

Cashflow Budgeting Workshop

4–5 March Timaru
6–7 March Ashburton

For more information contact Catherine Ibell at catherine.ibell@dairynz.co.nz.

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FRONT PAGE PHOTO

Corrigan Sowman, Ruth Guthrie and their children Wylie (left) and Timothy



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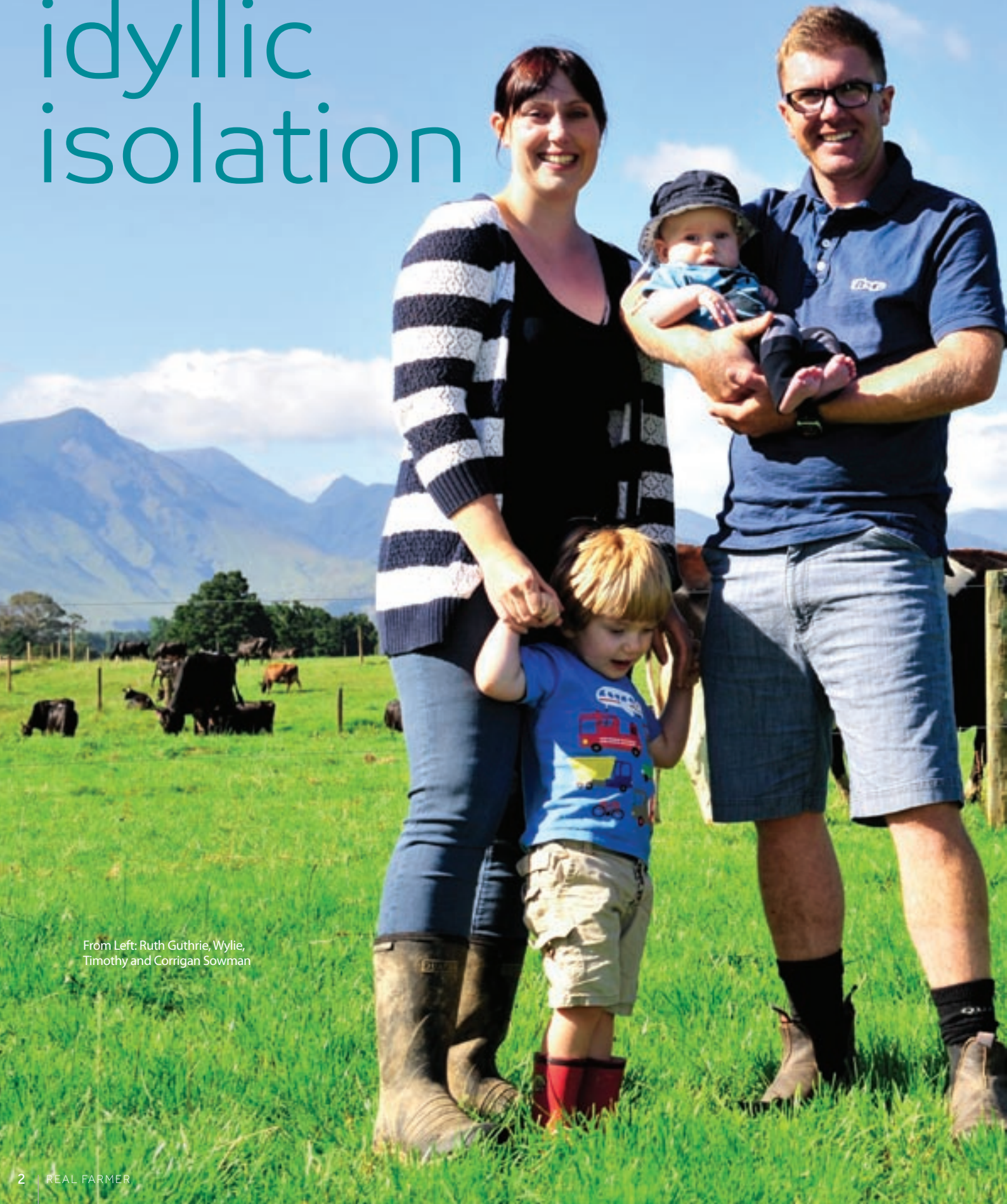
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Thriving in idyllic isolation



From Left: Ruth Guthrie, Wylie, Timothy and Corrigan Sowman

It's a long and winding road to get to the door of Corrigan Sowman and Ruth Guthrie.

BY MARIE TAYLOR

Driving up and over the Takaka Hill is a 30km hike from Riwaka in Nelson to their Upper Takaka farm in Golden Bay.

Surrounded by the steep bush-clad hills of the Takaka Valley, the couple farm the flats on both sides of the road, in a landscape dotted with mature totara trees.

This is an idyllic and isolated place in which to help run a thriving family dairy business. "It's a pretty nice place to come to work each day," Corrigan says.

"We work pretty closely together and we are partners within the family business."

Corrigan is the third generation Sowman to be farming this unique landscape.

His grandparents originally farmed 80ha of land, and his parents Glenda and Brian were very successful in gradually building this up over 30 years to the current 400ha property.

Corrigan and Ruth, and Corrigan's younger brother Sam and his wife Cara now share the management of the farm. They also employ three fulltime staff and another fulltime equivalent of casual staff.

Corrigan and Sam jointly manage the dairy platform of 270ha, and Cara takes care of much of the administration. "We work pretty closely together and we are partners within the family business."

Ruth worked full time on the dairy farm until children came along: Wylie who is two and a half, and Timothy who is just a few months old. She now contributes to the business in springtime with calf rearing, and otherwise keeps busy teaching Les Mills group fitness classes in Takaka and as a specialist cake baker and decorator.

Glenda and Brian are still actively involved in the farming business, particularly with the young stock.

It's just over six years since Corrigan and Ruth came back to Uruwhenua Farms so that Corrigan could relieve the day to day management burden from Brian.

He and Ruth brought an impressive skill set home with them. He has a Bachelor of Applied Science from Massey University and worked in Canterbury as a dairy farm consultant for Dexcel, the forerunner to DairyNZ, and also worked for consultancy firm FarmRight.

"Working in Canterbury as the dairy industry was growing rapidly was a massive opportunity for me when I was 24. I have been able to take much of this experience and apply it to our family business."

Corrigan has a couple of off-farm roles too, the largest of which is chairing SIDE, the South Island Dairy Event.

"I've been involved with that for the past four years, and I'm also a director of a large scale farming business in Southland."

"We saw the ATS membership as a great opportunity to be involved in a farming co-operative that brings benefits to us with access into some really good service providers..."

Ruth hails from Ashburton, where her parents John and Margaret are health professionals. She has a PhD in Ecology from Lincoln University, but found the switch to farming came naturally as farming is in the blood.

Her grandparents Bill and Gwen McConnell were one of the earliest ATS Shareholders farming at Lauriston, and Ruth and Corrigan have inherited that Shareholding.

Ruth's grandmother was chuffed that someone in the family had gone farming, and she would be delighted to have seen the couple's boys growing up in the country.

"We saw the ATS membership as a great opportunity to be involved in a farming co-operative that brings benefits to us with access into some really good service providers such as Meridian for irrigation power and many Ruralco Suppliers such as Stocker Dairy Services."

There are other benefits too, such as access to the recent ATS Farm Safety Training day which is run in conjunction with Ruralco Supplier Unique Solutions.

"We are bound under law to protect the people who are operating on our farm, so understanding our obligations was really useful."

"I saw the Farm Safety Training day as a way to have a refresher and focus on health and safety. We had a plan in place and it highlighted where the gaps were, and gave me more enthusiasm for developing some detail."

Corrigan admits they were a bit weak on health and safety, particularly around the responsibility they have to people coming to work on the farm, such as contractors.

"We are bound under law to protect the people who are operating on our farm, so understanding our obligations was really useful."

Corrigan, who flew down to Ashburton for the day last winter, says "to be honest, there is still work to do for us, because the health and safety plan is an ever changing and growing document."

"One of the great things about the day was I came away with a very good physical and electronic resource, which we open just about every other day." This includes forms to download for people coming onto the farm.

"I would thoroughly recommend it as a good refresher for things you might not be doing. It was well facilitated by Unique Solutions Owner Cindy Meadows, and we had a pretty open conversation on the day, and people shared their experiences. Anyone would benefit from the training."

And this year their goal is to apply for an ACC discount—something which can happen in any farm business after a health and safety plan and procedures have been put in place.

Corrigan says there's a change happening in New Zealand culture about health and safety issues. "The old Kiwi "she'll be right" attitude isn't okay when it comes to health and safety anymore."

Nowhere was this demonstrated more on their farm than when they decided to review their irrigation systems to improve productivity.

K-line irrigation throughout their dairy platform required a huge amount of work of up to five to six hours of manual shifting each day using quad bikes.

That's a lot of time for anyone to be on a quad, and this increased the risk of accidents Corrigan says.

"It's a unique system which fits both our topography and our landscape with lots of native trees."

The solution has been a huge redevelopment of their irrigation system, replacing 120ha to date with solid set irrigation, which are blocks of sprinklers in a 24m offset grid pattern on two metre high fence posts.

"It's a unique system which fits both our topography and our landscape with lots of native trees."

Previously the K-line had a 10 day return period which limited production. The new system can apply 5mm in 24 hours and is fully automated, giving total control. "On that part of the farm we have gone from three hours of manual irrigation shifting to none."

Irrigation is a strategic asset for the business, and they take water from the Takaka River, which is fed by the Cobb Hydro dam. While rainfall is quite high at 1500 to 1800mm/year, during November to March falls are infrequent.

"We have very free draining soils with a moisture holding capacity of only 50mm. In 10 days without rain we are pretty dry."

When the initial irrigation was installed 10 years ago, production lifted by a third, Corrigan says. They still have 150ha of the dairy platform to convert to the new system.

"It's a very exciting project and it dovetails into health and safety. K-Line is a brilliant tool, but if you look at the number of hours on a quad bike it is a risk. We have to consider the safety of our employees."

Looking after everyone on the farm is an important issue in an isolated region where there isn't a big pool of local staff. "Bringing people into the region isn't easy."

Corrigan explains they run the business around the idea of risk. His parents had grown their business aggressively, and they wanted to make it easier to manage.

"It's a very exciting project and it dovetails into health and safety."

Part of that was moving from two small herringbone sheds to centralising milking in a modern 54 bail rotary cowshed. Milking used to take up to five staff and a total of 24 labour hours a day to complete.

Now with a new modern rotary cowshed built in 2009, milking staff needs have more than halved, with two staff needed for a total of 12 labour hours a day, giving a substantial improvement in productivity.

"We wanted to have really good facilities where people wanted to come and work, and with our shed we have achieved that."

The dairy has Milfos INTELSCAN Plus milking electronics, and an LIC Protrack cow EID and drafting system with a Rakaia Engineering in-shed feeding system, making it one of the most advanced sheds in the top of the south.

"Our ethos is to be pretty self-contained, rearing and wintering all stock with up to 20% of the cow diet supplemented seasonally, including some barley from Canterbury and palm kernel.

They are currently milking 870 cows in two herds this season, down from the 1,030 the farm ran when Corrigan moved back to the farm.

Per head performance and per ha production has lifted from the former level around

1200kgMS/ha, and is now hitting close to 1500MS/ha which is pretty good for this end of the country, he says.

"We wanted to have really good facilities where people wanted to come and work, and with our shed we have achieved that."

It's taken a series of small steps to improve things: pastures, irrigation, grazing management, cow condition and breeding.

Now the challenges on the farm are around environmental change including nutrient budgeting and soil testing.

"Our waterways have been fenced for five or six years and we have pretty good riparian plantings. In the last couple of years we have been soil testing each paddock in June, and we've realised some reasonably significant savings in fertiliser.

"Sustainability is a terrible cliché now, but we are trying to stay abreast of everything going on in that area and think 10 years out about how our effluent systems are going to be future-proofed, and how we maintain our soils and limit nutrient runoff."

BELOW: Corrigan in his dairy shed

OPPOSITE: The Takaka farm

OPPOSITE BELOW: A view of the farming landscape; Corrigan and Ruth with their young family



“Sustainability is a terrible cliché now, but we are trying to stay abreast of everything going on in that area and think 10 years out about how our effluent systems are going to be future-proofed, and how we maintain our soils and limit nutrient runoff.”



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Ruralco balances the card equation

With the New Year comes the continuing expansion of our Ruralco charge card service, and even as you read this shareholders in the Otago-Southland region will be receiving a copy of their card in the mail.

NEAL SHAW, GROUP CEO

Later in the year the card will be rolled out through the Nelson-Marlborough region, and we already have a strong team in place throughout the South Island to support the card's promise to deliver real value to our shareholders.

Our intention is to fine tune the card's operations within the South Island, but we are already receiving calls from North Island shareholders keen to get their hands on a Ruralco Card and access the benefits that brings. Of particular interest to cardholders are the significant fuel discounts available through the 330 Mobil stations already accepting the card nationally.

As a farmer shareholder in Ruralco it should hopefully be easy to appreciate the benefits that accrue by being a member of a well designed charge card service. Lower prices and good deals are the expectation, and we at Ruralco can proudly stand by the claim we are already delivering those to our cardholding members. That reality is growing by the week as we continue to work hard expanding the number of quality locally owned businesses wanting to belong to Ruralco as preferred suppliers.

Our intention is to fine tune the card's operations within the South Island, but we are already receiving calls from North Island shareholders keen to get their hands on a Ruralco Card and access the benefits that brings.

However the expectation to deliver the "best deal" is only half the equation. The other half is the need to ensure a quality charge card service also meets the expectations of our suppliers, the hard working local businesses that sign on to offer those good deals.

This side of the equation is often easily overlooked by card companies as they strive to focus on growing cardholder numbers and transaction volume and with it the fees earned through the card.

However it has to be asked if, in pursuit of greater volume and card income, are suppliers' interests always being well served by the companies selected to be suppliers? Some rural charge card services have a swathe

of "big box" retailers that accept the card. In one case the "Red Shed" retailer sells the products that over a dozen locally owned and operated retail outlets may sell. But the policy to have a large "one stop" retailer raises the question about how committed a card company is to its local suppliers.

The philosophy and the reality for us at Ruralco is that we want to offer real value to farmer shareholders, but want to do so while balancing the other side of the "equation", by fostering and growing our relationship with those locally owned businesses that form

the backbone of the rural communities our farmer shareholders live around.

In short no business is an island, farming or otherwise, and pursuing the lowest cost, best deal regardless of outlet ownership does little to foster the dynamic, growing rural business communities our farmer shareholders value.

At Ruralco we look forward to continuing to play a vital part in fostering and strengthening those relationships so we all benefit.

BELOW: Neal Shaw, Group CEO



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ABOVE: Midsize 240 watt solar pump system

Solar technology stacks up

Advances in solar technology are attracting the attention of farmers, both big and small. BY LINDA CLARKE

Canterbury developer, Alastair Frizzell, says farmers are investing in solar power to run water pumps and irrigators, and the technology stacks up financially and environmentally.

Alastair was a dryland mixed cropping farmer for 30 years at Kirwee, before turning a lifelong hobby in things electrical into Frizzell Agricultural Electronics. His son Nicholas is on board as technical manager and the pair design and build scales, weighbridges, solar lighting and water pumps.

The business employs four others and operates from a workshop at the original family farm.

Alastair says farmers should be considering solar systems if they have a long way to take electricity.

The Frizzells have solid research to back their new solar products and say solar-powered water pumps can be used not only to pump water to stock but also to run a wide range of irrigators, even centre pivots and other spray irrigators.

"We started out doing stockwater systems, especially in the hill country, then got enquires from farmers on the plains, where farmers have to fence off stock from waterways. Now they can be used in household situations and for irrigation."

Alastair said solar power pumps were currently being used to irrigate sizeable areas—tens of hectares—and are proving economical to install. "The cost of putting in mains electricity is often

in excess of \$100 per metre. If you take it one kilometre, you can pay tens of thousands of dollars and often it is more economical to put in a solar powered system."

Using solar power also meant no monthly electricity costs.

He said solar panels were robust and long-lasting, still able to deliver 80 per cent of their rated power after 20 years. Batteries to store and use the energy generated are also becoming more efficient, and solar energy technology is improving all round.

As word spreads, the Frizzells are fielding more inquiries, from all parts of New Zealand. They recently designed a stockwater system for a dairy farmer wanting to winter 1000 cows in a remote West Coast valley.

They were also price competitive for a pump to feed a centre pivot from a holding pond on a Mid Canterbury farm; the nearest electrical connection being 500m away.

They are currently working with farmers in Otago who are considering solar pumps on streams to irrigate farmland.

"In a lot of cases, farmers are not aware of what we are capable of and the range of equipment we have, and its applications," Alastair said.

Frizzells has access to weather and topography data, which help initial site assessments. Technology to manage the solar energy is also important, so pumps operate at a consistent voltage.

"In the last four years we have done a lot of work to put together systems that fits farmers' demand in New Zealand. We have been working with the systems for a while and we keep refining and improving them, and the market is growing naturally."

Alastair said he enjoys talking farming with customers and often knew from firsthand experience what they wanted from a solar powered unit.

"We used to farm organic peas, so this solar pump system also fits with our philosophy of keeping clean and green."

He thinks it will appeal to dairy farmers who must now fence stock from waterways. "Often we can put in small relatively low-cost solar systems to pump water out of streams or water races into troughs alongside. That is one of the big challenges; if you fence a stream how are your stock going to have water when they are 5km away from power."

Alastair says feedback is positive from farmers who are already using solar powered systems and the technology was being showcased at field days so others could see its advantages.



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An eye for good stock pushes production

ATS's newest director Jessie Chan-Dorman and her husband Hayden are combining leading genetics with long established principals to breed efficient, high producing cows for their Canterbury operation. BY RICHARD RENNIE

Jessie Chan Dorman and Hayden Dorman



ABOVE: Jessie and son Adam

Hayden and Jessie have moved rapidly through the dairy sector since they started variable order sharemilking 800 cows for Federated Farmers Dairy chairperson Willy Leferink back in 2009.

Today the couple own 1,700 cows, leasing the land from new Italian owners the Barilla family. Hayden and Jessie have welcomed the opportunities and plans the new owners are bringing to the Dorie property, as they continue to focus on selecting and breeding high producing cows for the operation.

At its simplest level the Dorman's policy is to "make every cow count", with the goal to have every cow producing at least 100% of her body weight in milk solids.

To achieve that, Jessie and Hayden have adopted a breeding programme focusing on the traits ultimately contributing to that goal. This involves utilising overseas sourced Holstein-Friesian genetics through World Wide Sires and combining that with the skills of stockmanship, requiring an understanding of a cow's physical make up and traits that help or hinder her efforts to produce such a significant volume of milk solids over her lifetime.

The programme is a natural combination for the couple's own skills; Jessie's well founded scientific knowledge, backed by an Honours degree in Animal Science from Massey, and Hayden's strength in stockmanship and observation.

Jessie's Kellogg Rural Leaders research report in 2012 challenged the conventional wisdom on NZ's Breeding Worth (BW) Index, with its focus on production that forms 66% of its weighting.

"We have tended to see the industry 'follow the numbers' when it comes to selecting cows, putting the BW figures first, with little attention to aspects of a cow's physical makeup."

Her report and their own practices highlight the value of Traits Other than Production (TOP), and the role they play in driving a

cow's productive ability. TOP are not included specifically in BW calculations.

"The problem now is with a history of seasonal production in low intensity systems with low per cow production, cows' physical conformation has not been challenged, and still is not through the Index.

"But as we challenge cows to produce more, greater pressure goes on them, through their frame, their udder and their vital organs like lungs and heart."

TOP focuses on key physical features of a cow, including her capacity to generate milk.

One litre of milk requires about 400 litres of blood to pass through the udder, and to achieve such volumes the cow requires good heart and lung capacity.

Physically, this is reflected in the space between her front legs "so what's between the front two legs will influence how much she can produce from between her rear two legs," says Jessie.

"At its simplest level the Dorman's policy is to "make every cow count", with the goal to have every cow producing at least 100% of her body weight in milk solids."

While protein production is a top driver for cow selection with the Dorman's, this is tempered by a cow's udder form, including udder support and attachment. Then comes cow capacity and her strength, and the integrity of her frame. Such TOPs are critical when a cow is being required to produce an average of 600kg of milk solids a year.

"That is a large volume of milk you are asking her to process through her udder, and to be capable of carrying around with her. If these traits are not there, then she will not be able to sustain that production for much more than a couple of years."

Longevity is a key outcome for their breeding programme as they strive to achieve around 30% of their herd in the seven-years plus age bracket. Nationally, that figure is only around 20%, with too many cows dropping out too early.

Jessie believes more farmers in high producing areas like Canterbury are coming to recognise the need to "look beyond the numbers" of a national index and consider TOPs if they are to get the most out of high cost cows and not lose them from the herd too soon.

With 25% of their herd winter milked, the Dorman's have the opportunity to give cows a second chance to get in calf within the year. They recognise it is a big ask to require cows to produce 50 litres a day after calving and be back in calf within six weeks of mating.

"For that reason we will give them two chances, but it is important not to carry them if they don't."

The research Jessie conducted for her Kellogg report, backed by her and Hayden's experience

on their operation, is that TOP are linked strongly to longevity, and more attention to TOP stands to generate some major income benefits to the dairy sector.

If every cow were able to gain even one extra lactation, it would be worth a massive \$655 million to the industry.

Using a selected World Wide Sires bull team, the Dorman's aim to match particular cows to specific bulls within that team, taking a "corrective mating" approach to lifting traits that need to be lifted, or maintaining those that are working well for certain cows.

Jessie says the system is not overly onerous and despite not being from the industry, or an expert on TOPs, she has found it easy to understand and apply. Hayden's own stockmanship has understandably helped them improve TOPs within their herd, and he continues to build that knowledge through taking judging courses and upskilling.

"I think what we are starting to see are more farmers considering TOPs, and now those old learned skills of judging a cow by her physical appearance will be applied more alongside the excellent genetics available out there, to deliver cows that are better matched to the farm systems they are farmed in."

Director welcomes new ATS challenge

Jessie Dorman is relishing the challenge of becoming a director with ATS, and sees it as an ideal fit alongside her governance and farming experience.

Jessie is no stranger to quitting her overalls and heading into town to play a part in the bigger picture of the industry. She has only recently left her position as vice president of the Sharemilkers section of Federated Farmers, but maintains her role as vice president for Mid-Canterbury Feds. She also spent some years in Wellington as a policy analyst before going dairying. She is looking forward to applying some of her learnings from the Fonterra Governance Development Programme.

"I think ATS has been guided by two very clear principles, to be there for real farmers, and to deliver lower costs to its shareholder members. I strongly believe rural co-ops have played a big part in rural NZ's success, and it is good to be able to bring my range of skills to use with the ATS co-op"

She sees the latest venture in Ruralco as a new era for ATS that provides growth, but also ensures the co-op can stick closely to those two clear principles of lowering costs for farmers and real farmer focus.

Pools and Pumps

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Pool & Pump World supply, install, service and repair pools, spas, pumps, rural and domestic water systems throughout Canterbury. Our 24 hour servicing makes us the first choice in Mid Canterbury.

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Thoughts from across the rivers

When we were contemplating conversion to dairying, one factor we found attractive was the cash flow. BY ELE LUDEMANN

In conventional sheep, beef and cropping farming a lot of money is spent weeks, and even months before any return is made and most income arrives in bigish lumps very few times a year.

With dairying, regular payments come each month. What no-one tells you though, is that while cash flows in, it also flows out.

That's to be expected in the first season when the costs of conversion have to be met but the cash flows out in subsequent seasons too.

Anyone who's built or altered a house will know there are always unexpected extras and that the project will take longer and cost more than the most carefully planned budget.

That happens with dairy conversions too and just like a house, a dairy conversion doesn't stop with the building. Once it's up and running there are always improvements to be made and the possibility of extensions.

On our farm that meant another dam and more irrigation. That led to more stock, a second dairy shed and the need for another house for the manager who was running the farm with 1,200 cows.

What looked good in theory didn't work so well in practice. Our experience with extensions led us to the conclusion that when it comes to dairy farms, bigger isn't always better.

We decided to get smaller by building a third dairy shed, and adding a few more cows until we had up to 600 on each farm with sharemilkers running each one as a separate unit.

“What no-one tells you though, is that while cash flows in, it also flows out.”

That did work much better in practice. Smaller units are easier on staff and stock with both animal health and production improving as a result.

We were the first dairy farm in our area but the development of the North Otago irrigation scheme led to more conversions and we're now surrounded by cows.

The impact of greater cash flow is obvious on the farms and in the wider district. There are a lot more jobs on farms and for businesses which service and supply them. Many of those are skilled including vets and tradespeople.

There's also been a population boost. There were four houses on our farm and the immediate neighbours' before irrigation, now there are 14. The average age of the people in those houses is much lower than the age on the farms was, so the benefits aren't just financial but social too.

Too often dairying is prefaced with the word dirty. But every shareholder on the North Otago Irrigation Scheme is required to have an environmental farm plan which is independently audited each year to ensure soil and water quality aren't compromised.

If only the people so vehemently opposing proposed irrigation schemes in other areas could see that it is possible to have sustainable farming that balances environmental, economic and social needs.

All it takes is reliable water and when the water flows, cash flows too—In and out.

Ele Ludemann
homepaddock.wordpress.com



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Setting the stage in engineering

Starting from small beginnings in a Rakaia blacksmith's shop, Pluck's Engineering is one of the most well known manufacturers of heavy rollers, and dairy effluent equipment in New Zealand. BY JONTY WARD

The blacksmith's shop hasn't ceased trading for a hundred years and has had several owners. The first owner was Bill Lee Blacksmithing, then Gaylor and Grigg Blacksmithing and Welding, who also sold tractors and machinery for some time. "My parents bought the business in 1966, Dad (Graham Pluck) was one of the first and last of the generation where his qualifications are a Blacksmith/Welder," said Neil Pluck.

Pluck's Engineering was then established, with Neil and his wife purchasing the business about 10 years ago. Neil's trade is a Fitter/Welder section-A. "I did my apprenticeship under my father, before I travelled and worked all around NZ and overseas gaining experience along the way, then came back about late 1990" Neil said.

Today the business employs 16 staff, mostly tradesmen, with three apprentices of various ages. Neil says they can turn their hand to any job.

Pluck's have been turning out several heavy rollers each month, since the 1960's. The innovative team are always working on improving their products and making them bigger and better. The latest project is a 7.5 metre land roller, probably the largest to be built in New Zealand. "Our rollers are known as trouble-free, and the top in New Zealand. We go the extra mile when manufacturing and will not cut corners," said Neil.

Heavy chisel ploughs manufactured at Pluck's and big square bale feeders (imported from Canada) are also popular products manufactured in their workshop.

The dairy boom opened a new door for Pluck's Engineering when it started about 25 years ago. In recent years Neil and his design team introduced effluent pond stirrer technology to New Zealand after realising the impact the oxygen and agitation had on the effluent in the farmers pond and making the grass grow better. A large range of pond stirrers and effluent irrigation equipment can be viewed at Pluck's in Rakaia, from small sizes up to custom-made large models.

Another dairy-focused product made by Pluck's is the Enviro-Saucer, which is a concrete saucer-shaped effluent pond, originally invented by Neil's father. The concept has been copied across New Zealand and Australia.

"It's a compliment that others copy the products we design and build," said Neil.

To go alongside the Enviro-Saucer, the design team at Pluck's have introduced the effluent

screening system which can screen effluent right down to particle sizes of less than 1mm. They also manufacture a range of effluent irrigators, pump rafts and walkways, main line installations and complete effluent system designs.

Servicing and maintenance of the effluent equipment is an important division of Pluck's, the team can fix any make, in very short timeframes. "Our record was seven effluent pump repairs in one day."

The general engineering shop is always busy with farmers visiting regularly to get various jobs done. "We can repair anything from hand-shears, to combine harvesters, to ploughs," Neil

said. "We pride ourselves on being adaptable to any job, and a variable workload in a day doesn't bother our tradesman engineers."

Pluck's Engineering has always been at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

"My father and I have always been innovative with the business, we actively want to develop locally-built quality products, rather than to import them from other countries," he said.

Neil said this is what makes Pluck's different from other machinery firms. "I like the challenge of building the gear from scratch, and being able to see the finished result at work."

He credits the longevity of the business to having the ability to change. "From a business point of view, we would be struggling along if we hadn't adapted with the times, especially within the dairy industry," he said.

Pluck's have been proud ATS supporters for over 25 years and are now making the most of their relationship with Ruralco.

BELOW: The Pluck's premises on the main road through Rakaia; Liam O'Connell inserting an axle into a heavy land roller



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Pneumonia in sheep and cattle

Pneumonia in sheep and cattle poses a significant threat to production through reduced live weight gains and higher than normal levels of mortality.

BY IAN HODGE BVSC., MACVSC. VETENT RIVERSIDE.

Infections of the lungs, the external linings of the lungs and inside of the rib cage can result from viral or bacterial infections or both.

In lambs, bacterial pneumonia and pleurisy is common and can result in lambs becoming sub clinically infected. This means we cannot see any outward signs of the lambs being ill, but the disease is present and is having an effect on the ability of that lamb to grow.

A Meat and Wool New Zealand study of ovine pneumonia in 2006 showed the estimated annual average cost of pneumonia is \$28m, and that of pleurisy \$25m. The combined cost of pneumonia and pleurisy to New Zealand farmers is estimated to average \$53m per annum. Clearly this is a significant disease process costing us dearly in terms of lost production.

Pneumonia and pleurisy in sheep is very common in Canterbury. This may be due to colder nights and warm humid days through late summer and autumn. Dust can play a role in pneumonia, especially when lambs are yarded or driven longer distances by road. As with many other diseases, stress also plays an important role. Shearing can produce stress and weaning can also be a significantly stressful event, often starting the pneumonic process. Trace element deficiencies,

especially selenium, may be part of the reason Canterbury sees a higher than average prevalence of respiratory disease in sheep. Feed changes resulting in transient hunger are significant stressors in sheep and should be avoided. Parasite infections can also lead to malnutrition, low protein levels and compromised immunity. Risk factors associated with pneumonia include shearing lambs at or near to weaning, breeding ewe replacements on farm, number of lambs sold (which is an indicator of flock size: population density is correlated with a higher risk of pneumonia) and poor ventilation when sheep are housed overnight.

Weaning and tailing are perhaps the greatest stressors to lambs and can clearly result in a high prevalence of sub clinical pneumonia and pleurisy, so it follows that all practicable steps should be taken to mitigate the chance of lung disease becoming significant at these times.

Weaning and tailing should be as stress free as possible with minimal handling, droving and yarding. When yarded, ventilation for the lambs should be very good. Dogs should be kept under control and not used excessively. Lambs should receive vitamin B12 and selenium injections at tailing and weaning as this has been shown to be

protective against pneumonia, and lambs should ideally be set stocked after weaning.

At present there is no available vaccine in New Zealand which can reduce the effect of sub clinical pneumonia and pleurisy so we have to use management tools to reduce the effect of the disease. The best approach to prevent pneumonia and pleurisy is to tail and wean lambs at good body weights. Maintain low levels of stress at these times and maintain good consistent animal health and nutrition at and after weaning. A planned animal health programme as discussed with your vet is strongly recommended so that the obvious and important things are not overlooked.

Ref. Pneumonia and Pleurisy in Sheep. Meat and Wool New Zealand study 2006.

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Leading the pack, at pace

Chris Quin has a passion for speed. Speed is the game for the prominent Kiwi business leader as the CEO of Telecom Retail overseeing 'ultra-fast' change in one of the country's most well-known big businesses.

PROVIDED BY TELECOM

Chris Quinn

Added to that, he's a Sir Peter Blake Leadership award winner and recently took on the role of Chairman for The Icehouse, assisting promising Kiwi small businesses as they skyrocket their success on the local (and global) business stage. Not surprisingly, what time he has outside of work, Chris takes his need for speed to a whole new level. And despite wife Sue's reluctance, he's right behind son Callum as the seventeen-year-old takes his place in the driver's seat.

Secondary school student Callum has spent the past ten years fuelling a shared passion with his dad for motorsport. The Quin Motorsport team is fast making a name for the up-and-comer from the north to the south of the country. During the 2013/2014 season, Callum entered the 86 Racing Series championship in his Toyota TR86 with the first round in Cromwell, as well as participating in the BMW E30 Race Series and graduating from the Motorsport NZ Elite Academy at High Performance Sport of NZ in Otago. You can see his story on www.facebook.com/callumquinracing.



The Quin family are all involved supporting Callum's pursuit. 'Manager and Technology lead' Chris plots the speeds and stats on his trusty iPad, daughter Eilish (13) expertly fills the team manager role on weekends, and mum Sue bites her tongue and closes her eyes as the teen corners at up to 200km/hr.

For Chris, watching from the sidelines as his son grows into a young man leading the pack, provides a welcome contrast from the pressures of the boardroom—"it's been a great equaliser away from the world of work. I like to think an ability to change a gearbox in less than 45 minutes lends me at least a little street cred!" And more importantly, it provides him the chance to reconnect with his own Kiwi family traditions and those of other hands-on motorsport families that for decades have cheered-on, fundraised and changed tyres for such a flourishing talent-base of drivers, engineers and support teams. A community which has a long history drawing international attention from its out-of-proportion success.

Chris says "I was recently at the McLaren dealership launch in Auckland and I looked around at all these huge names in the sport home for the holidays—three-time IndyCar Series winner Scott Dixon, Kenny Smith with forty-odd years of championship titles under his belt and still racing, Mitch Evans, Brendan Hartley, Richie Stanaway. Not to mention the staggering numbers of world-class Kiwi engineers who are outperforming the big names on the global racing circuits. Motor racing in New Zealand, like yachting, is another demonstration that our limited size doesn't determine our success."



"There's something in the Kiwi number 8 wire mentality, taking things apart and putting them back together again. Having spent twenty years working in NZ's biggest technology provider, it's rewarding to see Callum begin his journey in contributing to building the elements of our world together – and it's great that he may have the chance to combine his passion with his career."

"While I'm clearly a keen advocate for the growing role technology has in our lives, there's no doubt that one of the modern challenges parents are faced with is the struggle to establish quality time with teens so often glued to their smart devices! Having a shared hobby means we continue to learn from and listen to each other, and while as Callum's expertise and skill grows, our relationship and the way we interact with each other changes."

Says Callum: "Motorsport has always been a great love of mine, from the competitiveness to the camaraderie between other drivers and myself. Having the whole family involved in the sport as part of the team is awesome because we all get to spend time together at the track."

Says Chris, "I'm sure many parents can appreciate how hard it is to see your kids go off on dangerous pursuits—and don't get me wrong, while I have complete faith in the car, the roll-cage and his ability, racing cars are dangerous at times! However, as they say risk nothing, gain nothing. It's really rewarding to see Callum learn the value of good decision making at a young age, and that taking calculated, informed risks can have a huge payoff."

"If you haven't felt the pain of the loss, the win doesn't matter. Not to say there hasn't been pain, both physical and mental. And in fact, in his early karting days, Callum was hospitalised a couple of times."

Chris also credits the sport as helping him get about the country to connect with Telecom customers, real Kiwis, away from the confines of the company's corporate HQ in Auckland. Otago (including racing calendar highlight at Cromwell's Highland's Park), the Waikato, Taupo, Fielding have each been weekend meets the family have travelled to, following the sport.

Chance meetings on the racetrack have helped him accelerate small Kiwi businesses into The Icehouse business incubator providing the guidance and resources for them to chase their own success.

TOP: Callum with Toyota GT (2013)
BELOW LEFT: Callum Karting (2010)

"Currently, what was traditionally known as 'telco' is undergoing a rapid and relentless change, which keeps me on my toes morning, noon and night. We're working hard to embrace and get ahead of the curve on the shifting demands of our customers to support their hugely increased thirst for data and content—be that via mobile or fixed broadband services.

"For me, being a part of Kiwi motorsport has been a release from the pressured world of telecommunications, which is recognised as one of the fastest moving industries around. But I guess when you break it down; there are more similarities between the two worlds than there are differences!

Delivering unrivalled speed and performance are two fundamentals that tie closely with Telecom's vision to be the country's number one mobile and broadband provider. The company has in recent years sponsored a number of Kiwi motorsport hierarchies, helping develop Kartsport nationally through to NZ rally champ Haydon Paddon.

At its core, Chris's passion is in making motorsport memories for a new generation of Kiwis so they can succeed on the track as the Quins have.

"I look back fondly at the time spent as a boy at the tracks with my uncles all over the world. It thrills me that I can play a small role in creating those experiences to talented young people like Callum. A few years back during an extended family holiday overseas I treated him to a surprise visit to the Formula One at Parco di Monza in Milan Italy. There was no doubt in my mind at that point seeing the effect of that energy and noise in Callum's eleven-year-old eyes, to show that he'd caught the fever too."

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Your total employment solution

Consultant Cindy Meadows sees farmers' eyes glaze over on the subject of health and safety legislation, but her farm safety plans are helping many over the regulatory hurdle.

BY LINDA CLARKE

Cindy owns and operates Unique Solutions in Ashburton, offering health and safety and human resources (HR) advice to farmers and other businesses.

She says there's been a big shift in the way farmers see health and safety and most know the new legislation is there to keep them and their employees safe. It just seems like a lot of paperwork to become compliant.

Cindy runs training courses through ATS, where farmers receive a manual that is both a workbook and farm safety plan able to be tweaked to individual operations. The manuals are simple and practical, and designed to be working documents—not left on a shelf in the farm office to gather dust.

Unique Solutions is also boosting its HR services, having taken on the clients of Rob Stevenson from Teamwork SI. Rob's stellar work as a workplace problem-solver and employment matchmaker is being continued by Cindy. She has plenty of experience in both health and safety and HR, and a genuine knack for gauging people and their needs. Cindy started in HR and health and safety while working for CMP; she was working full time and completing a Bachelor of Business Studies (majoring in HR management, communication and relationships) through Massey University.

With the support of her husband Nathan, she quit her job and they moved to Palmerston North so Cindy could study full-time. Before she had even graduated, CMP recruited her to be part of the

Greenfields Rangitikei plant, recruiting staff from managers to processing workers.

It was a chance to cement what she had learned in a workplace situation and she excelled, also being tasked with implementing ACC accreditation systems to make sure the plant passed crucial health and safety audits.

Cindy said she learned a lot about industrial relationships, union workings and people in general while recruiting for the plant. The workforce was a close knit group, presenting both challenges and opportunities to progress.

After the birth of their first child Emily, Cindy and Nathan moved back home to Ashburton to be closer to family. Her mum and dad, Robin and Iain Tuanui, pitched in when she started part-time as an Executive Assistant for the Spray Marks Group.

The enterprising Ashburton business gave Cindy a chance to use her skills and she stayed four years, until starting Unique Solutions in July 2012. Since then, she has been busy helping other business owners through health and safety legislation. Ruralco brought her on board to help their cardholders which has increased the demand for her services and required Cindy to employ staff to assist within the business.



ABOVE: Cindy Meadows
MAIN IMAGE: ATS Farm Safety Training in progress

In December, she took on Teamwork SI's clients, continuing to offer recruitment, performance management and compliance advice for a range of farming and commercial business owners.

Cindy said clients appreciate simple and practical advice and she had seen a culture shift from farming lifestyles to farming businesses.

"Through Ruralco we are also hoping to offer some HR courses around recruitment and job descriptions, performance reviews and disciplinary action. We are putting together a package for farmers with the whole health and safety goal to make it simple and practical. It will be value driven, using language that is appropriate to the size of farmers' organisations and covering minimum requirements under the legislation."

Cindy said farmers needed to see the resulting farm plans as living documents that should be reviewed alongside annual budgets.



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Teat-sealing of heifers

Heifer mastitis on a number of farms has been a major issue with some farms over the past few seasons. Some farms record anywhere up to 30-35% clinical heifer mastitis cases within seven days of calving. Teat sealants have proved very popular and greatly reduced the level of clinical mastitis on a number of farms. Teat-sealants have now been on the market in New Zealand for a number of seasons. They are made from a non-antibiotic inert substance which when inserted in a sterile manner into the teat-end aids in the prevention of mastitis around the calving period. There are currently a number of teat sealants currently available on the market.

Using teat sealant to reduce mastitis in heifers appears to be coming more popular as clients realise the benefits of minimising the number of clinical cases of mastitis in heifers over the first two weeks of lactation. Other benefits include increased retention of heifers within the herd as there is a reduced

need to cull heifers for having chronic mastitis or only three quarters at the end of the first lactation. Labour costs are also reduced with a having a smaller penicillin or 'red' cow herd which also leads to reduced costs related to antibiotic treatments, milk-with-holds and risk of penicillin grades.

In the past few seasons we have had a number of clients that have reduced the rate of clinical mastitis from 20-30% down to 4-5% clinical cases within the first two weeks post calving. Although results are not always so dramatic we have seen most clinical case rates on farms at least cut in half with the preventative use of teat sealant products. Many clients have been overwhelmed with how relaxed the calving period is when you don't have to deal with mastitic heifers.

It is important to mention that teat sealants are not wonder products and that a full mastitis management program will help reduce mastitis within your herd. Care does

need to be taken with insertion as the products do not generally incorporate antibiotics and hence there is a huge risk of introducing infection into the quarter if the job is not done properly.

At Vetlife we provide a teat sealant service with trained experienced staff. We have a state of the art teat sealing trailer which we can move from yard to yard and treat heifers. If you would like to know more about this service, please feel free to contact your nearest Vetlife Clinic.

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Governance courses get farms on track

In the rapid rush to scale up farming operations and capture the benefits that go with that, the foundations of governance can risk taking a back seat. For large scale and rapidly growing dairy operators in the South Island there is now an opportunity for governance skills to catch up to the operational skills many farmers already practice so well. BY RICHARD RENNIE

The DairyNZ Farm Business Governance Programme initiative to help lift those skills officially launches this year, after a pilot programme last year. Course development was funded as part of the Pastoral Growth Partnership.

Course manager Adrian Van Bysterveldt says his original sole focus was on the management issues facing large dairy operations.

“However by talking to bankers and advisors, we soon came to see that the issues these farms faced were often grounded in poor governance decisions, that in turn impacted on the management issues larger farms faced.”

A typical example is a 2,200 cow farm run as a single operation.

“In reality, your ability to find a manager with the very special skills to manage that number of cows and the staff required is quite limited. A better decision at board level would be to have split the farm into three operations—three good managers for 750 cows each are a lot easier to find than one for 2,200. The stresses experienced at a management level, were borne by a governance decision.”

He has observed that for every successful large scale dairy operation there is one with burgeoning problems that often stem from the foundation of how they are governed, and this applies to both family run and syndicated businesses.

The governance course aims to instil some disciplines around how the direction and strategy of a dairy business is set in motion and maintained, and is designed to encompass all those involved at that level.

“In the case of family businesses, we are encouraging not only the parents who may have built the business and now have family running it to attend, but also those children to attend, this came through clearly in the pilot course we conducted.”

For this reason, the typical business group attending from each participating farm may have four to five people in it, and it is anticipated the courses will have about eight to 10 farm groups at each. Each course has five formal group days spread over 11 months and Adrian

says sharing experiences with other attending farmers can be as enlightening as learning from the skilled speakers and advisors who contribute.

Groups are also encouraged to bring along a trusted advisor. Their role as someone who knows the individuals is to almost act as a coach, ensuring the course requirements around writing up visions, goals and strategies are completed, and to confidently challenge the individuals within the group and help them reach common agreement on governance issues.

“Our experience has revealed farmers are often loath to write stuff up. Part of good governance is setting things up so people are accountable, and proving they have done what they said they would do, and recording it.”

Adrian stresses the course is not aiming at a dry formalised approach to running an exciting, valuable operation, but aims to help individuals have a clear outline of their own responsibilities that are defined between being a manager, a shareholder and often a director as well.

“It is not only applicable to family businesses—they can be hard enough when you wear those three hats. But in syndicated businesses, where you may not know the people you are partnering with, that can be even more difficult.”

The course helps people better understand and appreciate the need to delineate between governance and representation.

“Often people will think because they have a certain amount invested as a shareholder they can dictate operational aspects of the business—good governance should ensure the lines of where one stops and the other starts are very clear.”

The course includes presentations by experienced agribusiness advisors, with learning revolving around the “four pillars” of governance—determining purpose, effective governance culture, accountability and effective compliance.

The farming operation of each attending group gets a full assessment of how it stacks up against seven key governance practices before the course starts. Each workshop from then on minimises theory, sleeves are rolled up, and the focus is on how best to get each business working on practical changes to improve governance performance.

Adrian says the location of the formal day courses are deliberately selected to pull people away from the distractions of daily farming operations.

“We would hope they might decide to make a bit of a trip out of them, possibly someone in Canterbury deciding to attend the one up north at Kerikeri and having a break as well.”

Even after the pilot version last year, Adrian has success stories of businesses that have set clearer policies, responsibilities and directions for themselves.

“One family assessed its investment in non-core assets, quit most of them, paid down debt and re-established a better relationship with its bank that saw a saving of \$30,000 a year in interest payments.”

As South Island dairy operations continue to grow in scale and complexity, Adrian sees governance skills having to be sharpened quickly, not only to deal with generational succession issues, but also for otherwise unrelated people learning to better communicate and develop successful farm businesses.

BELOW: [Adrian Van Bysterveldt](#)



New venture on good footing with course

Kerry and Carol O'Connell decided to participate in the pilot governance course DairyNZ started last year, and are glad they did. Last June marked their first step into running their 212ha dairy property themselves after having leased it out, and this involved teaming up in an equity partnership with Sam and Anna O'Reilly. "Our equity partners encouraged us to take on the course. We wanted to start with a good understanding of how best to run it well, and get more insight into the dairy sector," says Carol. The couples embarked on the course well ahead of the venture's June 1 start.

Kerry says a key learning was to get policies and processes down on paper. "We got these done and dusted before we started, having learned more on the course and then talked between ourselves about how we wanted to apply it."

"Kerry says a key learning was to get policies and processes down on paper."

Formal meetings are held every month and the review process means they understand the business better through regular communications, often away from the farm environs.

The couple were impressed with the variety of dairy farming people on the course and enjoyed the cross pollination that came in the open forum, sharing ideas with others.

"It's not easy to do, it involves a lot of sitting inside which farmers by nature don't always like, but it was all very applicable when you took it home to the business, and it's backed by a very high calibre of presenters," says Kerry.

To learn more visit: www.dairynz.co.nz/governance



ABOVE: Carol and Kerry O'Connell

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Keeping your wheels turning

Gary Downes has been in the tyre trade on the West Coast for 25 years. He owns a well-established business, with an experienced team keeping farmers on the job with every kind of tyre and all sizes of batteries.

Gary said farmers needed tyres for their tractors, farm bikes and cars, and also for the few irrigators that were making an appearance on the traditionally wet coast.

His team of four has a workshop at Paroa but with three service vehicles, the qualified technicians spend a lot of time on the road between Whataroa and Westport.

Dairying is one of the coast's top three industries, with the growing numbers of dairy farmers in the region; sheep and cattle farmers have also intensified. Gary says providing a complete tyre and battery service for farmers and their support industries is crucial, be it a burst tyre in the paddock or bringing a vehicle to the yard for work. He can supply the right product and service for cars, 4WDs, light and heavy trucks, earthmoving and all farming equipment.

Downes Tyres is also an agent for SuperCharge batteries, a long-lasting durable auto battery. Gary says having batteries tested regularly and maintained is important and will extend the life of the battery. His staff use the latest testing and diagnostics on both batteries and tyres to ensure high performance, long life and value for money.

Downes Tyres

241 Main South Road
Greymouth

Tel 0800 280 800
sales@downestyres.kiwi.net



From hydraulic hoses to pot handles

"MacGyver's got nothing on us," says Evan Grooby, the man in charge of the coast's leading hydraulic repair shop Hose and Hydraulic Centre.

The 1970s TV character was the master of improvisation, and Evan's experienced team of four are also called on to find creative solutions to odd problems.

Hose and Hydraulic Centre, also an agent for Hydraulink, has been operating for 20 years and Evan began working in the industry 10 years before that. As well as supplying and servicing the coast's hose and hydraulic needs, the business has a retail store selling engineering tools, and a workshop. Evan says they enjoy being problem-solvers, be it fixing a busted hose on a farmer's tractor or a broken pot-handle. "Nothing's too small!"

The technicians do a lot of work for dairy and drystock farmers, in the fishing industry and anywhere where hydraulic motors are a vital piece of machinery. A call-out service covering the area from Karamea to Haast and inland to Arthur's Pass is part of the service, and with the workshop so many kilometres away the vans carry essential replacement parts. The technicians frequently use their MacGyver skills. "Some of our jobs can be 120km from base. If you don't have something, you have to improvise or make it on the spot. But that's what we like about it, you never know what you are going to do the next day."

Evan says their big black and yellow building stands out physically, but also because it contains stock stacked to the roof with replacement parts and tools that are needed by the coast's farming, commercial and industrial workforce.

Hose & Hydraulic Centre

Cnr of William and Guinness Streets
Greymouth

Tel 03 768 9068



Shattered, chipped, cracked?

For more than two decades, Coast Glass has been replacing, repairing and custom-making glass for West Coast farmers.

The business is owned by Janet and Jarrad Roberts. Jarrad is one of four qualified glaziers working from the Paroa base which services clients from Karamea to Haast.

Jarrad says replacing farm machinery glass is just one of their lines of work and the business operates a 24-hour call-out service to keep downtime as short as possible for farmers.

He said safety glass was a requirement for many of their farm jobs, which included replacing windows on tractors and diggers and in cow sheds. A fair amount of creative ingenuity is needed too.

"We have a lot of older stuff on the coast too, so sometimes we have to custom-make a replacement. We just try and adapt glass we have."

Jarrad said all the glaziers on staff were qualified and experienced, and used to dealing with corrosion in glass fittings.

Coast Glass

239 Main South Road
Greymouth

Tel 03 768 9966 or 08002GLASS
coastglass@xtra.co.nz



Having a crack at any mechanical issue

Coasters are famous for their obliging natures and the team at Greymouth Mitsubishi are no exception, willing to turn their hand to all manner of mechanical and automotive issues.

The staff of seven include qualified mechanics and can repair, service or source parts for not only Mitsubishi vehicles but all makes and models.

Auto-electrician and mechanic Sean Griggs leads the team. "Owner Allan Gibson (Pesty) brought the business in 1990 as a muffler shop and the business has expanded over the years. We do all sorts of mechanical and electrical repairs. With farmers, it is mostly exhaust repairs. Often it is making new mufflers for older machines, so we need to be creative and innovative. We'll have a crack at anything."

Sean said experience was a valuable part of the team, which included three other qualified mechanics and a panel beater. An apprentice has also just been employed.

Much of their work is in the Greymouth workshop, where customers take their vehicles but an emergency service is available, especially for farmers when gear has broken down at vital times.

Customers hail from Karamea to Haast and book in work via email and phone, knowing their job will be handled quickly and professionally by one of the largest mechanical workshops on the coast.

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Embracing technology has been a critical part of its success and all of its branches are bright, vibrant and modern, catering for a diverse customer base of all ages and interests.

100% Ellerys understands that purchasing appliances is a major decision for most people and its highly-trained employees are on-hand to provide up-to-the-minute advice. Its service department is second to none, boasting experienced staff more than happy to arrange for products to be collected or fixed on-site.

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AQUAFLEX

Promotion winner makes the most of soil moisture monitoring



When Roger Baxter of Maronan converted his home block to a second dairy unit, installing Aquaflex soil moisture monitoring was a given after the enhanced irrigation management achieved with Aquaflex sensors on the original dairy farm.

Winning another unit that included two Aquaflex sensors complete with Telemetry in the Aquaflex Promotion from the ATS In-Store Days – in conjunction with Watermetrics was an unexpected bonus.

Aquaflex and Watermetrics ran a promotion in June and July where any Aquaflex ordered by a RuralCo card holder went into the draw to win a double Aquaflex system complete with Aquacom Radio Telemetry. The winning unit with two Aquaflex sensors attached to the Aquacom Telemetry Unit is commonly called a 'double' Aquaflex. This double Aquaflex system allows one sensor to be installed in the root zone of the crop, and another below the crop roots which allows any drainage past the lower sensor to be seen. The decline in soil moisture below Refill or Stress Point (an undesirable situation) can also be seen more clearly with the help of the bottom sensor.

Aquaflex Data is presented in a clear and concise manner the installation of the bottom sensor helps to demonstrate no water loss through the profile.

The blue line is the topsoil soil moisture where irrigation events are clearly seen. The bottom (black line) trace shows soil moisture in the subsoil, as you can see the subsoil moisture doesn't increase so no water is leaving the soil profile the root zone.

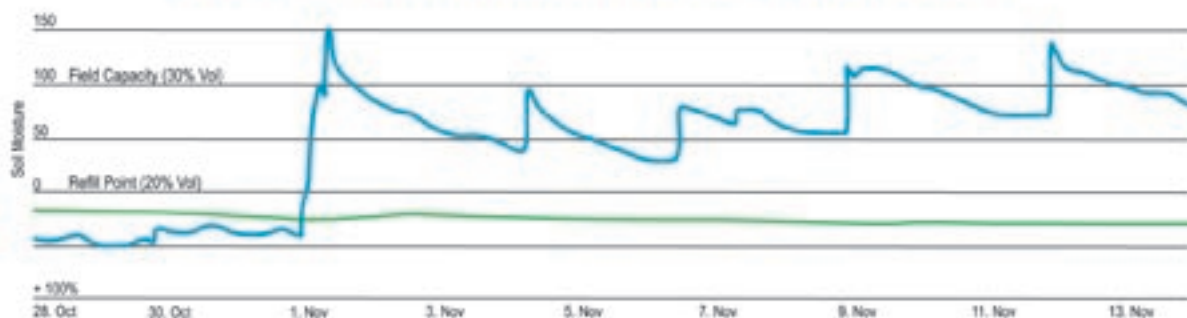
Roger has been a fan of Aquaflex for a number of years now but only purchased single sensor systems for pasture on the dairy platforms where the payback is quickly and easily seen.

Since the dairy platforms at both of the farms are already well monitored with Aquaflex sensors the obvious choice was to install the winning unit into the runoff block where irrigation efficiency and good management is just as important as the dairy platforms. So the Aquaflex team has installed the Aquaflex system into freshly drilled Kale where Roger and the farm managers will watch with interest to see how the double Aquaflex sensor system stacks up against the other existing single Aquaflex sensors. Observing any drainage events of the runoff block as they occur will without a doubt help with irrigation decisions if any drainage occurs within the irrigation season and also in the future with irrigation management, nutrient budgeting and crop rotation decisions.

Aquaflex soil moisture monitoring is used in many applications from fruit trees to pasture and cropping.

Watch out for installation photos and soil moisture and temperature information in coming articles.

Aquaflex Data is presented in a clear and concise manner the installation of the bottom sensor helps to demonstrate no water loss through the profile



The blue line is the topsoil soil moisture where irrigation events are clearly seen. The bottom (green line) trace shows soil moisture in the subsoil, as you can see the subsoil moisture doesn't increase so no water is leaving the soil profile the root zone.

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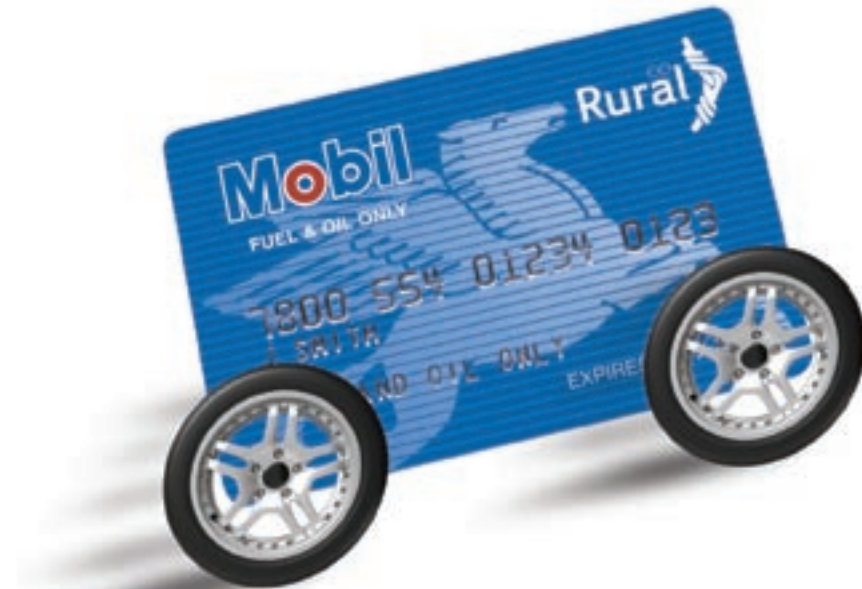
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New cross spectrum insecticide for forage brassica crops

A new insecticide that selectively targets key pests and controls them extremely quickly has been released in the forage brassica market in New Zealand.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY DUPONT (NEW ZEALAND) LIMITED

DuPont Crop Protection New Zealand Country Manager, Mark Christie, said DuPont™ Exirel® insecticide is registered for the control of caterpillars (including diamondback moth (DBM) and white butterfly), leaf miner and aphids in bulb and leafy fodder brassica crops.

He said Exirel® quickly stopped the target pests from feeding and also allows some key beneficial insects to survive and flourish.

“The pests stop feeding almost immediately and will die within 72 hours of application.”

By being specifically targeted at the pest species rather than a broad spectrum insecticide, Exirel® can leave certain beneficial insect populations in the crop and provide an opportunity for them to flourish in the days and weeks that follow.

Tests have been conducted globally, and also in New Zealand, to determine its effect on a number of key beneficial insects.

In trials conducted locally by Plant and Food Research in New Zealand, Exirel® produced very good results.

The parasitic wasp, *Asobara persimilis*, which targets the pest leaf miner, was rated harmless with less than 10 percent mortality when exposed to direct spray and dried residue from Exirel® insecticide.

Tests were also conducted on *Diadegma semiclausum* which is a parasitic wasp that attacks diamondback moth, and demonstrated some effects on the insect when exposed to direct spray or dried residue.

He said Exirel® quickly stopped the target pests from feeding and also allows some key beneficial insects to survive and flourish.

These tests have demonstrated Exirel® has moderate to no impact on key beneficial parasitoids that are present in fodder brassica crops when applied as per the label. Mark Christie said they encouraged farmers to time applications after the development of adequate leaf area and at the first signs of the target pests. “By applying early in the pest infestation cycle, this insecticide will help keep populations below damaging levels and encourage beneficial insects to assist,” he said.

“The speed at which the insecticide worked meant it is the ideal tool to help establish a vigorous growing crop.”

Exirel® is new chemistry with a single mode of action and will control DBM populations resistant to Organophosphates and Synthetic Pyrethroids. It is rainfast 2 hours after application and is available in a one litre pack, used at a convenient low use rate of 150 mL/ha, to treat just over 6 hectares of crop.

Give yourself a great chance of improving productivity in your fodder brassicas whilst harnessing the benefits of nature by applying Exirel® to your crop. For further information contact your local DuPont territory manager on 0800 65 8080 or your local ATS store on 0800 BUY ATS (289 287).

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Counting the cost of somatic cells

High somatic cell counts (SCC) are an obvious concern for farmers, but even if your SCC is below the penalty point threshold, you could still be losing income through reduced milk production, not to mention the time and expense involved in treating clinically apparent mastitis.

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY JAMES HAGUE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, SEALESWINSLOW

The somatic (body) cells that are detected in milk are mainly white blood cells, which appear in response to infection. A low SCC is an indicator of good udder health; a high SCC is an indicator of mastitis. As SCC rises, milk yield falls: a cow can have no visual signs of mastitis, yet still have a raised SCC, which means she would be producing below her potential.

DairyNZ has developed some good tools that you can use to determine the economic cost of udder health problems (www.smartsamm.co.nz). However, if you are using SealesWinslow's Tracker™ milk production software, you don't need to worry about using separate

spreadsheets—the ability to calculate SCC-related losses is built right into the software.

In Tracker™, the benchmark for SCC has been set at 100,000 - higher than is normal for the dairy industry. At the moment, only the top 10% of herds being monitored by Tracker™ achieve this goal. The graph below shows the value of the milk potential that is being lost by farms that are not meeting this SCC target: for an average farm the potential loss is around \$27,000 a year; for a large farm with high SCCs the loss can exceed \$100,000.

Lowering the SCC offers the chance to recover some of this potential loss. If the average farm mentioned above spent \$13,500 on reducing

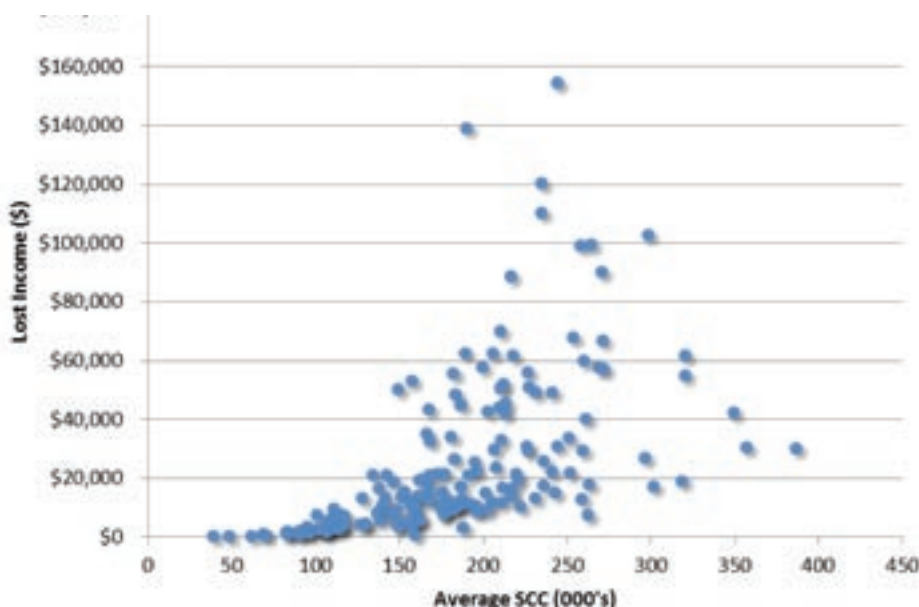
their SCC to the 100,000 benchmark, they could see a 2:1 return on their investment.

The challenge is to identify the best strategies for reducing your herd's SCC. Many factors influence how high the SCC is, so knowing where to start can be difficult. One of the easiest steps to take involves your herd's nutrition. Sub-optimal nutrition can undermine the performance of the immune system, reducing udder health. One mineral in particular plays an important role in combatting mastitis: zinc.

Zinc is needed for the formation of the keratin plug that sits in the teat orifice. This plug forms a barrier that stops pathogens entering the udder. The material in the plug is turned over quite quickly – around 40% of it is replaced each day—so it's important to have a steady supply of dietary zinc so new keratin can be formed.

Small amounts of zinc are taken up by cows grazing pasture, but if this dietary intake isn't meeting needs, then zinc methionine can be custom blended into stockfeed, e.g. as Zinmet50®. When used with other animal health practices, zinc can be very effective at helping to reduce SCC levels.

For more information on determining your potential lost production from SCC issues, and advice on how to address this, contact your local SealesWinslow representative.



The range of SealesWinslow nutritional products are available through ATS and Ruralco.

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The female challenge

If proving a point was one of the motivators behind establishing the Spring Challenge, then race director Nathan Fa'avae has certainly made that point—loud and clear. BY ANITA BODY

With over 900 women taking part in last year's Spring Challenge in Queenstown, it would seem Nathan has hit on a winning formula.

"I organised the original event as much as anything to prove that women are interested in adventure racing," says Nathan.

A World Adventure Racing Champion who has competed professionally for a number of years, Nathan says it's often been difficult to attract women to the sport. Teams are traditionally comprised of three males and one female, and that in itself is a hindrance.

"I have been an advocate of teams being made up of two males and two females because I think more women would be inclined to join adventure sport teams if they weren't on their own. It's not as appealing to be the only female on a team." Establishing the Spring Challenge allowed the sport to be more welcoming and attractive to women.

The first Spring Challenge was held in Hanmer Springs seven years ago. "We thought there might be 20 teams competing, with a total of 60 women. We ended up with 110 teams and 330 women."

Kaikoura was the next venue and despite the success of the first Challenge, organisers were still unsure of how popular it would be—but it sold out with 200 teams competing. "We had to turn teams away."

Since then, Nathan's wife, Jodie has joined him in organising the event, which always includes rafting (with experienced guides), hiking, mountain biking and navigation. Competitors don't know the course or the order or duration of each discipline until the night before. There are three divisions—3, 6 and 9 (formerly 10) hours, which roughly translates to beginners, intermediate and advanced.

Every Spring Challenge showcases the region it is held in, and according to Nathan, this maximises



ABOVE: From left, Hilary Totty, Hollie Woodhouse and Jacqueline Manson

MAIN IMAGE: Spring Challenge contestants on the course

the experience. All have been in the South Island and this year's event will be at Hokitika—the first time the Challenge has been held on the West Coast, and Nathan expects it to be popular because of its central location.

It's always held in the last weekend of September and this seems to work well, being particularly convenient for the many mums who take part, as this is usually the first weekend of the school holidays.

Most competitors are in the 35–50 year old age bracket, but the event attracts a whole range of women with varying abilities. The minimum age is

15 (with secondary schools able to enter teams) and the oldest woman to compete was a 75 year old.

Husbands and family members generally make up the support crews needed, and following many requests, a men's event is being trialed this year in April at Murchison.

One recent competitor, Ruralco Cardholder and Ravensdown Staff Member, Hollie Woodhouse describes the event as “awesome and well run”. She has competed in the 10 hour event, both at Motueka in 2010 and Queenstown in 2013. Her first attempt saw her team rescued after

18 hours, but last year she was better prepared and her team was 9th after a little more than 12 hours on the course. She says her team divided responsibilities with one leading, another in charge of navigation and the other in charge of food, with everyone working together to pick each other up when needed. She expects Hokitika to be a great location thanks to the good mountain bike tracks on offer; although she says the weather may be a factor.

Entries for this year's Spring Challenge open in April, but Nathan says if previous years are anything to go by, it's likely to fill up fast.

A true family event



Cycling has experienced something of a renaissance over recent years, with the establishing of cycle ways and numerous events around the country, catering for all ages and levels of fitness. BY ANITA BODY

Families, cycling enthusiasts and those looking to get fit, now have a wide variety of tracks, paths and events at their disposal to test their skills and capabilities—and we have one such event in Mid-Canterbury.

It was with great foresight that two local organisations decided to establish the ATS Longbeach Coastal Challenge, although when the

Longbeach School parent-body and the Hinds and District Lions first discussed their options, a motorcycle event was initially mooted. This was deemed unsuitable for the terrain and was replaced with a mountain bike race, the first of which was held in 2007.

At this time there were only two options for competitors—35km and 23km. These two mountain bike races are still the mainstay of the event, but other options have been gradually introduced over the years, making this a true family event with all proceeds being evenly divided between the Longbeach School and the Hinds and District Lions.

Now competitors can also take part in a 12km family mountain bike ride, and runners and walkers are also catered for with a 21km off-road run, a 12km recreational run or walk and most

recently, a 5km run or walk (suitable for buggies). The variety of options means there's something for the whole family. It's not unusual for members of the same family to take part in different events on race day.

One such family was the Saunders, with dad Mark (Ruralco Cardholder and ATS Director) competing in the 21km run, and wife Pennie and their two eldest boys (aged 8 and 7) taking part in the 5km run. It was the second time Mark had competed in the half marathon and he found it a great challenge and Pennie says the boys loved their run, tearing off at the start, leaving mum in their wake, although by the time they neared the finish line, all three had re-grouped.

“It's a really well organised event and it's something that we can all do. Next time the older boys want to do the bike ride, while our four year old might take his bike on the 5km walk/run track,” says Pennie. “It's a good way of introducing them to the many aspects of the event.”

“We'll be signing up again—it's local and is an easy event for the whole family.”

The Saunders family will be in good company—with over 60 per cent of competitors re-entering the event. The Coastal Challenge attracts entries from as far away as Nelson, Blenheim, Dunedin and the West Coast, with an age span of just five years old right through to the oldest competitor, who was aged 81.

Organisers will begin planning for this year's event shortly. It's always held on the last Sunday of November and organising committee member, Jo Taylor says they are very proud the event brings so many people to the district and for the rural feel it retains, despite the large volume of people who compete and attend.

“We have talked about capping the event to 1000 competitors. This number allows the organisations to achieve their fundraising aims while also keeping stress levels under control for the 100 or more volunteers who make the event happen and run smoothly. It's a great opportunity for everyone to come together and is a great family day out.

IMAGES: Contestants in the ATS Longbeach Challenge run and cycle

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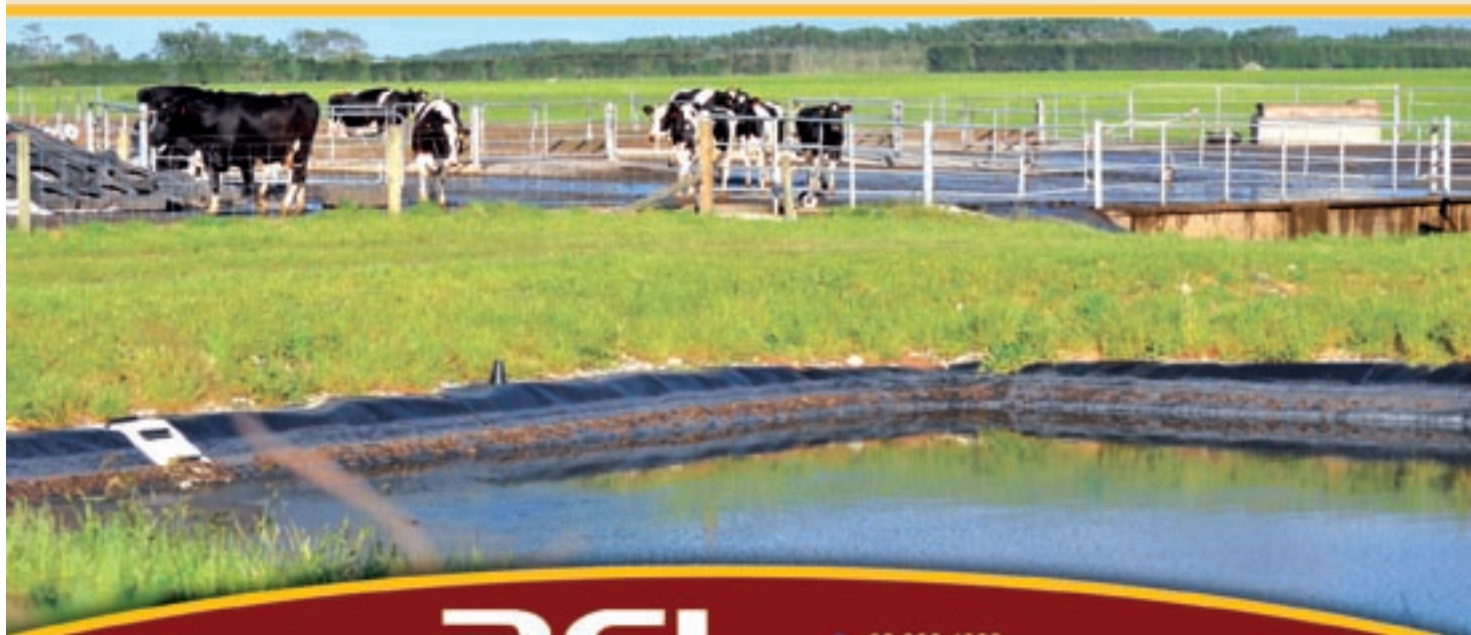
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Financial support for the students in your family

Getting finances arranged for tertiary study can be a very stressful process for all involved. For many first year students however, this is their first big step towards financial independence and it will teach them lifelong lessons about money management. CONTENT PROVIDED BY BNZ

There is a significant amount of financial organisation needed for tertiary study, including managing course fees, course-related costs, accommodation and living expenses such as food, transport, and utilities.

Stepping through a budget with your student is a great opportunity to share some of your worldly wisdom, especially if you have student days to think back to yourself. This can help remove some of the trepidation they may be feeling, which could be well-hidden under their excitement!

A good first step is to sit down together and chat through what the likely annual costs are going to be, and then talk about how these are going to be met. Government-funded options include student loans, student allowances and accommodation benefits. Whether your student is eligible or not for the latter two depends on a number of factors, including parental income.

Scholarships are an option too, although the deadline for many of these will now have closed for the 2014 academic year. These are valuable, as alongside student allowances, they don't need to be repaid. It's also worth discussing part-time and holiday work, as well as any support the family may be able to provide, be it financial or practical assistance such as use of a vehicle, firewood or food.

From a cost perspective, one of the bigger decisions to work through, after an academic path is selected, is where your student will live. Unfortunately, children from rural families are often unable to benefit from the cost savings of living at home while studying, so a more comprehensive financial plan may be needed to support them through their years of study.

There are two main options for out-of-town students; halls of residence or flatting. The main advantages of living in a hall are: fixed costs (food, electricity, internet etc are included in the room rate); transport (halls are often within walking distance to campus) and shorter time frames (you only pay for the duration of the academic year, unlike rent on a flat which often covers a full calendar year). Flatting is often cheaper and increases independence, but also requires more self responsibility.

Using a bank account wisely can be a very powerful budgeting tool—something that is highlighted on most tertiary institution websites. It is important to have an account that allows



students to compartmentalise their money so they know what they can spend now and what they need to hold on to for when bills are due. It can be very distressing for a parent to hear that their student has blown their budget on non-essentials and have come up short on money for rent or food. BNZ's YouMoney provides for exactly this. It allows you to split your money up however you wish, with multiple transaction and savings accounts. This option would allow your student to put their money into separate accounts, such as 'Food', 'Rent', 'Entertainment' or 'Textbooks'. This will allow them to know quickly and easily what they have available to spend now, without getting into trouble later when bills are due. Accounts are able to be easily opened and closed in seconds.

YouMoney is proving very popular with young people as it's very interactive and allows personalisation and 'drag and drop' functionality. It also allows users to set savings goals for accounts and easily track progress.

ABOVE: A Snapshot of BNZ's YouMoney

You can even get instant balances on BNZ's mobile app without needing to log in. The mobile app is available for iPhone and Android; transfer money, pay bills, open accounts, upload pictures and set savings goals all while on the run—a common feature of student life!

With the 2014 academic year just around the corner, make it a priority to have a 'Finance 101' conversation with your student, if you haven't yet. If you have younger kids with the luxury of time on their side, start them thinking about how they manage their money now and what their plans could be after high school. You can also introduce them to an easy to use and helpful banking solution such as YouMoney that will make money management as easy as possible for them and provide you with peace of mind.

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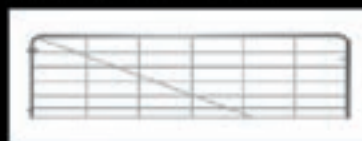
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Reap the full benefit of autumn pasture renewal

Imagine how much milk or meat you could produce if all your paddocks grew to their full potential. Better yet, don't imagine—reach for the calculator and work out what you would achieve if your poorest producing paddock(s) equalled the performance of those which are currently your best.

BY GRAHAM KERR, AGRISEEDS PASTURE SYSTEMS MANAGER

The answer may surprise you. Even good farms have under performing paddocks, and the difference between those and your best paddocks is typically more than 4-8 t DM/ha/year. Even at 4 t DM/ha, over 10 ha that's 40 t DM/year that you are not growing. And the feed quality of new pastures is generally higher to, measured at an extra 0.5 - 0.9 ME.

For a dairy farmer, at 15 kg DM/kg MS, 40 t DM/ha adds up to a lot of potential MS production (i.e. 2600 kg).

For a sheep farmer, this amount of feed could support an extra 40-50 ewes, as well as the ability to finish more lambs, faster, thanks to the better feed quality.

Upgrading poor-performing paddocks with new pasture cultivars is one of the smartest investments you can make in the on-going profitability and performance of your farm. Pasture remains New Zealand farming's key source of feed. Multi-

farm analysis has repeatedly shown that the amount of pasture eaten is a key driver of profit on farms.

With higher DM yield, more growth in the shoulders of the season, improved ME and the benefits of modern endophyte technology, new pasture pays for itself surprisingly quickly. And unlike purchased feeds, which are fed once and then gone, one paddock of new pasture can be grazed repeatedly during its lifetime.

Like fertiliser and good animal genetics, pasture renewal is an essential element of farm spending. Without it things quickly start to go backwards. By the same token however, you have to make sure that every dollar invested in pasture renewal delivers the best possible return. Here are some pointers that will help.

1. Find the paddocks that are holding you back

Best returns from pasture renewal come from targeting paddocks which grow significantly less than they should. Use grazing day records or growth rate data to 'audit' the condition of all your paddocks. Your ATS Seed specialist can help with this process. Two tell-tale signs to look for are paddocks with long return times between grazings, and paddocks with lots of grass weeds like cocksfoot, browntop and old perennial ryegrass. These are low in ME and hard to graze evenly, which in turn means poorer utilisation and reduced animal production.

2. Plan to renew more land

If you have a number of under performing paddocks, can you afford to leave them as they are? Financial analysis has repeatedly shown



ABOVE: Agriseeds Pasture Systems Manager Graham Kerr.

that in this situation a lift in the percentage of farm land renewed each year has significant economic benefits. Options for grass to grass renewal include cultivate-drill, spray-drilling or undersowing. Even if you can't renew them this autumn, start preparing them for renewal in 2013/2014, thus helping ensure a good result at that time.

3. Fix any underlying problems

Poor performing pasture has run out for a reason. It could be inadequate soil fertility, insect pest damage, poor drainage or a combination of these and other factors. These need to be fixed before sowing new grass and clover.

For more advice on getting the best out of your pasture renewal this season contact ATS Seed on 0800 BUY ATS (298 287).





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Co-op News

Check out the new suppliers in Otago and Southland

From February 1 2014, Ruralco is officially live in Otago and Southland with cards going out to new cardholders. We have lots of new suppliers in these regions with great deals and discounts on offer, and more are being signed up every week. To keep up to date with where you can use your Ruralco Card, check out www.ruralco.co.nz/suppliers/newsuppliers.



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Christmas Colouring Competition:

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AGE GROUP 8-11

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Second prize Georgia Lowe, 10 years



Visit us at the Southern Field Days

Ravensdown and Ruralco will be attending the upcoming Southern Field Days at Waimumu on February 12-14. Make sure you remember to bring your Ruralco Card with you and we'll cover your entry fee. We are looking forward to seeing you in the Ravensdown tent.

Farm Safety Training for Ruralco Cardholders

Today's farmers and land owners are required to actively manage all aspects of health and safety around the farm. To assist with this process Ruralco plans to provide cardholders with access to a farm safety manual and relevant training. Upon completion of the training, members will be able to apply for a discount on their ACC levies. Training dates are the 18 February, 18 March, 22 April and 20 May 2014 for \$550.

Seating is limited, so get in fast. For more information please contact Unique Solutions on 03 423 2273 or email cindy@uniquesolutions.co.nz or book online at www.ats.co.nz/farmsafety.

Have you visited the Ruralco Website yet?

Check out the Ruralco Website for everything Ruralco including latest news, publications, images, events and more!

It's also a great way to keep up to date with the latest places you can use your Ruralco Card, and to find a Ruralco Supplier who can provide the product or service you need. To view the supplier discounts you must have a log in, so visit www.ruralco.co.nz/login and create one today.

Name the Ruralco Dog

Jackson Allred, 13 years, has picked out the winning name for our Ruralco dog:

Oscar

Congratulations Jackson.



Supplier Map

Our representatives have been busy over the past few months working to sign up suppliers nationwide to help you get the most from your Ruralco Card. To view an interactive map of our suppliers, visit www.ruralco.co.nz/suppliers. You can view the suppliers by category, region or a combination.



Fuel Facts: Thinking smarter

Make sure you fully understand the value you are actually getting from fuel discounts.

“Save 30¢ per litre on fuel when you spend \$80 or more in a single transaction at participating businesses with your Smartfuel card” —it sounds good, but the discount is only for 50 litres, has to be used in one month and is essentially a discount on a product turned into a fuel discount.

If you take a closer look, you have to spend a minimum of \$80, which means a 30¢ per litre discount on 50 litres of fuel works out to be \$15 off.

The fuel station would give around 6¢ per litre towards the 30¢ which equates to \$3 when based on 50 litres, leaving \$12 to come from the business. This equates to the business offering a maximum of 15% discount off your purchase, which reduces as the purchase price increases. For example, if the purchase is over \$100 then the business is only giving a 12% discount instead of 15%.

Currently the Australian Government is looking at supermarket discount offers as it believes non-drivers are subsidising drivers in food costs loaded to give a fuel discount and putting independent stations out of business. The government is looking at introducing a 4¢ discount limit when a purchase has to be made to get a discount. If it goes ahead, it's possible the New Zealand Government would follow suit.

If you have any questions around fuel discounts, or would like to discuss your fuel requirements, please contact your Fuel Account Manager, Don Joseph on 027 839 7351 or don.joseph@ruralco.co.nz.

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