Holding on to the positives

A farmer's call to arms

Keep a clear head on-farm
Quake jump starts farmers’ gym

Tactics
Reducing production costs
over the fence...

While we are in challenging times, the majority of dairy farmers are resolute in the face of adversity and are remaining as positive as they can.

We are an industry used to facing challenges, whether it’s climatic, feed, biosecurity, skill shortages or finances. However if there’s one thing farmers do well, it’s pulling together as a community and helping each other out. Working together and supporting each other is in our DNA.

This issue of Inside Dairy is all about our people and how we need to not only farm well, but live well and look out for those around us.

Above all else we need to make sure the wellbeing of our families, friends, staff and neighbours is a priority.

As an organisation, we have relaunched our Tactics programme with an immediate action of visiting farmers to make sure they are aware of and have access to, the right support based on their individual circumstances. It’s been through these visits, and many more over the coming months, that we have come across farmers who are going the extra mile to help each other out.

Many farmers have told us they are quite active in checking-in on each other to ensure their neighbours and friends are okay.

Our Tactics host farmers are also a great example of farmers helping farmers. They have been willing to share their information and stories with others over the past 18 months through events and online. Some of those stories are quite personal. So why do they do it? The words of one of those farmers sums it up nicely: “if I can help one soul out there, then that’s great.”

The same goes for our 420 Dairy Connect farmers who are acting as short term mentors.

A well-known sheep and beef industry leader said it’s in our DNA to collectively cope with challenges and support each other. I know it’s not easy but by focusing on being well yourself and managing stress, farmers can spend time on the technical aspects of farming, while caring for your staff and your family.

I welcome your feedback. Feel free to email me at tim.mackle@ceo.dairynz.co.nz.

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TAKE 5...

Tips for farmers

1. Attend a Pasture First workshop.

These nationwide events will help farmers develop a pasture first approach to help reduce costs long term. Review your pasture harvest figures and see realistic benchmarks for your location. Find out how you can harvest more pasture, and what this means for your stocking rate and supplement use. Register at dairynz.co.nz/pasture-first.

2. Read sharemilkers Q & A

Questions and answers from the recent sharemilking events are available online at dairynz.co.nz/sharemilkerQandA. More than 500 farmers attended the events, with common questions centered around different options for sharemilkers and working together with farm owners.

3. Prepare your forecast cashflow budget.

Refreshed templates are now available to help you prepare your forecast cashflow budget for the 2016/17 season. Visit dairynz.co.nz/monthly-budget.

4. Gain farmer advice through Dairy Connect

More than 420 dairy farmers have volunteered to act as short-term mentors for the farmer-to-farmer support service which facilitates the sharing of information across a range of subject areas. To get connected visit dairynz.co.nz/dairyconnect.

5. Hunt down waste on-farm

The Waste Hunt Challenge is a six-step process to help identify and remove some of the wastecosts from your day-to-day operation. Find solutions that are minimal cost and have a positive impact on the team, as well as the farm business. Sign up to benchmark where you are now and receive weekly emails. Find out more at dairynz.co.nz/waste-hunt.
Love farming, love life
Sick of the constant negativity in the mainstream media, dairy farmer Olin Greenan shared a call to arms on social media.

“To all my farming friends, I’m fed up with the negativity. Let’s buck the trend and tweet daily why you love your job. #lovesfarminglovelife” tweeted Olin.
The sentiment is one shared by many New Zealand farmers, and Olin says now more than ever, it’s important to keep the positives in mind.

“The doom and gloom can quite easily drag people down,” says Olin. “We need more stories about how people have coped with the downturn. A lot of people are in unknown territory. Supporting each other and working together is crucial.”

**Family focus**

Olin’s first tweet on why he loved being a dairy farmer captured a photo of his two-year-old son Jack’s mini redbands, with the caption “A farmer of the future takes a well-earned break”.

Olin says since he and his wife Anna have had children (Jack, two and Noah, three months), being able to spend more time with them is a massive benefit of the farming lifestyle.

“I don’t have to travel to work each day which means I get to spend a lot more time with the kids. Taking a break from the farm and having lunch together is a real treat. Anna and I also believe it’s important to sit down together as a family every night for dinner.”

When it comes to his mini future farmer, Olin says Jack loves everything to do with farming.

“Farming instils a good work ethic into you and your children. Safety comes first though and children can only go on the farm if they are 100 percent supervised.

“We really focus on achieving a good work-life balance. We want the children to see that. We don’t want them to be put off farming in the future because we were always working long hours during their childhood.”

**Love of farming**

Olin says as a dairy farmer, he has the ability to tinker at so many different things.

“I love that every day presents a different challenge. I’m never bored and I’ve become knowledgeable in many areas.”

Becoming a dairy training tutor for farmers studying towards Primary ITO qualifications is another role Olin has taken on and is relishing.

A love for the outdoors and animals were other major drawcards to dairy farming for Olin.

“These benefits don’t change with the milk price. I still love what I do every day.”
The road to success

“The path to success does have ups and downs,” says Olin, “and it’s unique for everyone.

“To get through a dip we focus on our goals. We know if we keep steering in the right direction, we will come out the other side. Knowing what we’re aiming for, that’s what keeps us going.”

For Olin and Anna, the end goal is becoming part owners in a farm.

Moving to New Zealand from Ireland in 2001, the visible progression pathway was one of the things that enticed Olin to stay.

“Our medium term goal was a 50:50 sharemilking position, which we’re using as a vehicle to achieve farm ownership.

“Money and success are also motivating factors. A lot of our goals involve us being in the top 10 percent which helps us to progress.”

Olin acknowledges the need to be flexible along the way.

“You can’t get too rigid or it will get you down. Regularly reassess where you’re at. A dip may put you back a year or two, but keeping that end goal in sight is a great motivator to stay on the right path.

“Setting non-financial goals is really important as well,” says Olin. “It’s not all about the money.”

Achieving balance

A slightly larger herd (480 cows) than their previous sharemilking position has given Olin and Anna the ability to step back from the coal face more often.

“With staff on-farm, it’s a lot easier to have a holiday.

“I’ve had to work on my ability to delegate and accept that others might not do something exactly how I would.

“We want to enjoy the journey, not just the destination. I’m not going to work a ridiculous amount of hours and not see my family.”

One way Olin and Anna achieve this is having discipline around their lives.

“As a family, every Sunday night we have a meeting and plan the week ahead. We factor in how we will fit in other commitments – it’s not just work. It helps us achieve balance.”
Team Greenan

Olin credits his strong relationship with Anna as being at the heart of all their achievements. “If the core of your relationship is strong, everything else is easier. Prioritise what’s most important to you.”

As a trained dietitian, Anna adds a valuable outside perspective for Olin when he is immersed in the day to day running of the business. “We approach things as a team and specialise in our own areas,” he says.

“Anna is really interested in looking after employees and health and safety. She recently completed the Primary ITO Human Resources module of the Diploma in Agribusiness Management – that’s her specialty in the business. Coming from another industry she brings an added dimension of skills and experience.”

Support system

The abundance of support networks are a major credit to the industry, says Olin. “New Zealand dairying has a big emphasis on professional development and knowledge sharing. With networks such as Young Farmers, Federated Farmers, Dairy Industry Awards, Dairy Connect mentoring and DairyNZ groups, there are a lot of experienced and established farmers that are keen to mentor young ones.”

Olin is part of DairyNZ’s Dairy Connect programme which links a farmer who is looking for information or support with another farmer who has experience or knowledge of the issue. “I’ve been linked with a couple of farmers and I’ve found it quite rewarding. It’s about banding together and getting support from someone who’s been through a similar experience.”

Time out

Simple but regular outings help Olin and Anna switch off. With Maraetai Beach 15 minutes’ drive from their house, it’s a favourite getaway spot which doesn’t have to cost anything. “Getting off-farm is crucial to help clear the head. “We’ve got some non-farming friends and chatting to them, we realise there are similar issues in other careers as well. It’s about keeping it in perspective.”

For wellbeing, Olin can’t emphasise enough the importance of talking to others. “I’ll often ring people up just to check in or chew the fat. If I’ve got something on my mind or a problem, it helps to get other people’s perspectives.”

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**The Greenan’s non negotiables**

1. Focus on the positives and keep things in perspective.
2. Approach everything as a team.
3. Keep long-term goals in sight – but be prepared to make adjustments.
4. Talk to people and stay connected with groups – both within and out of the industry.
5. Take breaks off-farm – however small.

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**Let’s get down to business**

To read more about how Olin and Anna are dairy farming, visit [dairynz.co.nz/greenans](http://dairynz.co.nz/greenans).
Organisations sought to spread the GoodYarn message

DairyNZ is working to try to spread the influence of its ‘GoodYarn’ workshops, promoting better understanding of mental health around rural New Zealand.

GoodYarn is one of a number of initiatives DairyNZ is involved with to address stress and promote wellness and wellbeing on the country’s dairy farms.

More than 30 workshops have been run since DairyNZ introduced GoodYarn in February.

But realising that DairyNZ hasn’t got the resources to reach everyone on its own, together with Wellsouth Primary Health Network, it has created a licensing programme which allows others to deliver workshops.

The workshops emphasise four main elements; 1/ ensuring participants know what they need in order to be resilient and strong; 2/ removing the stigma of mental illness; 3/ recognising the signs when someone is stressed – how do you know, how do you approach them about it; 4/ learning how to refer them on if they need greater help than you can give.

The workshops, aimed at farmers and rural professionals, take four hours, including lunch.

DairyNZ wellness and wellbeing programme leader Dana Carver says the great value of the GoodYarn workshops is that they have robust clinical backing and are specifically tailored around agriculture. Participants learn and then practice scenarios based on farming situations.

“We couldn’t possibly get around everyone so we’re encouraging others to lead the workshops,” says Dana.

Getting a licence is inexpensive and DairyNZ will help to train people.

A number of organisations have taken up the option including three rural support trusts, and LIC and CRV who participated in a joint training session.

“We are in discussions with Fonterra about buying a licence as well as some of the major banks.”

It takes two days to train to lead workshops and DairyNZ can help organisations find the right person in an organisation. It can also help with costs.

“Our goal is to get all the big organisations to train their people and every support trust to train in their community,” says Dana.

For information on getting involved with GoodYarns visit dairynz.co.nz/goodyarn.

The work is funded through the Transforming the Dairy Value Chain Primary Growth Partnership.
Connecting farmers in challenging times

Otorohanga farmer Ged Arbuckle has seen a few downturns. After 19 years on his current 150ha farm, Ged’s farm business is a fine-tuned system, but not without learning a few things along the way.

Now a mentor for Dairy Connect, the DairyNZ farmer-to-farmer support service, Ged says having a network to fall back on is crucial for farmers, particularly in challenging times.

“The biggest thing is to have a network – that’s the handiest thing,” says Ged. “To be able to pick the phone up and talk to someone you know who’s been through that sort of thing.”

Ged has been through downturns in the 1980s and joined Dairy Connect as a mentor to help any young farmers who might be facing their first big financial challenge right now. “I thought I could have a yack to guys one-on-one, see where I could help.”

Sheer determination

Born and bred in the city, Ged followed the traditional herd assistant-sharemilker-farm owner path. Now Ged and wife Kay have their daughter and son-in-law Helen and Peter Connole as contract milkers.

Since the reduced milk price, measures have been taken to keep the farm as profitable as possible.

“We dropped 10 percent of the herd last September and we did 10,000kg MS more with the same inputs. This season will be the same or a bit better. A lower stocking rate is a big help. We had 400 cows, we now have 360.”

Farm system

The farm has a once-a-day herd of young cows which do all the walking but keep condition well and achieve better mating results.

The farm runs a six percent empty rate and an 83 percent six-week in-calf rate.

Traditionally the farm annually brings in 100t maize silage and 50ha silage from the run-off. The 180t PKE (palm kernel expeller) typically fed in early spring and mating won’t be purchased next season.

Approach to next season

Ged says things will be frugal on-farm next season.

“All you need is a working shed, water supply, good races and to feed your cows well,” says Ged. “That said, you still have to use the vet and provide for those cows. Family is also really important – you have to get out of the place every now and then too.

“When you are full-time hands-on on the farm, having good healthy cows calving and coming in and milking like a train, it’s still very satisfying.”

GED’S ADVICE FOR NEXT SEASON

☐ Look after yourself, your wife and kids.
☐ Look after your animals.
☐ “That’s why we farm.”
☐ Pick up the phone. Catch up with family and friends.
☐ Use your professionals (fertiliser and farm advisors help reaffirm your plans).
☐ Surround yourself with positive, can-do people.

Dairy Connect

Dairy Connect is a DairyNZ service that connects farmers with other farmers who can help talk through strategies, look at a new project on-farm or assist with a difficult situation.

Support farmers can help in a range of areas. From animals, staff, pasture and feed, through to environment, business and adverse events, Dairy Connect support farmers have a wealth of knowledge.

To register your interest in Dairy Connect, visit dairynz.co.nz/dairyconnect.
Helping farmers through a crunch time

Rural Support Trust coordinator Lyn Neeson works with farmers in some of their toughest times.

When up to 200 farmers were affected by the June 2015 flood in Whanganui, Lyn helped with things as varied as tracking down an available digger to helping manage farmers’ finances.

Adverse events like floods, droughts or snow have been the Rural Support Trust’s bread and butter. But now, more work is done during what Lyn calls “peace time”.

“Peace time work helps farmers through a crunch time – from financial issues to managing a divorce, we see a whole range,” says Lyn. “Rather than being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, we now have a proactive role.”

Lyn says often when people are under stress, relationships become strained – whether that’s personal relationships or those between contract milkers or sharemilkers and farm owners.

“We often send a facilitator to help talk through any issues farmers have or they can point people to further help,” says Lyn.

“We don’t go along and solve people’s problems. We listen and give ideas, we help work through problems with people.”

Help with finances

Common calls are around finances. “We had a young couple contact us who’d gone contract milking. They’d been severely affected by an adverse event and didn’t have the experience to manage income issues, after farming during a good period,” says Lyn.

“After the adverse event, everything came tumbling down and they didn’t know what to do. We have talked to all the people involved in their business, from farm owner to the accountant. We’ve helped develop a system for them to follow and they can now move forward.

“It’s really rewarding to help someone like that. Now they have a plan and are paying off their debts.”

How Rural Support Trust can help

- Financial: help get finances back on track with the bank, accountants etc.
- Neighbour disputes.
- Personal relationships: managers/farm owners/sharemilkers.
- Personal relationships: marriage/partnerships.
- Adverse events: drought/flood/snow.
- Mental health: emotional issues, depression.

Rural Support Trust – by farmers, for farmers

There are 14 Rural Support Trusts nationwide. The service is run by farmers, for all farmers.

The service is confidential.

rural-support.org.nz | Ph 0800 787 254

The Rural Support Trust is funded for adverse events by the Ministry for Primary Industries. More recently, DairyNZ has invested in the trust to support farmers for other issues year-round.
Quake destruction jump-starts woolshed workouts

One man’s desire to own and operate his own gym is playing a big part in helping farmers in the North Canterbury district get in shape and keep a clearer head on the farm.

Allan Henderson is the proud owner of The Woolshed Gym on the edge of Culverden. Now in its sixth year of operation, the gym is an integral part of the town’s business and social network. The gym is exactly as its name suggests. The abandoned woolshed was owned by a friend of Allan’s who was not using it on his farm. It prompted Allan to fit it out as a gym, offering a friendly social setting for locals to get in shape. Personally it provided him with employment in the wake of the Canterbury quake that destroyed the gym he worked at in central Christchurch.

Among his keen membership are local sharemilking couple James and Ceri Bourke who have been dedicated members for the past year. James first started visiting the gym after having some back problems through the farming season, and soon found the exercises and advice from Allan made a lot of difference.

“James went along to get fitter and stronger for calving, and I decided to go along as well,” says Ceri.

“We thought over calving we would have to give the gym a miss, but we enjoyed it so much we fitted it into our day, going along around midday when most of our jobs were done.”

She describes their three-times-a-week routine as “a bit of everything”, mixing up strength training and free weights with cardio to keep a good variety of muscles, including the heart, well exercised.

“Allan Henderson is the proud owner of The Woolshed Gym on the edge of Culverden. Now in its sixth year of operation, the gym is an integral part of the town’s business and social network. The gym is exactly as its name suggests. The abandoned woolshed was owned by a friend of Allan’s who was not using it on his farm. It prompted Allan to fit it out as a gym, offering a friendly social setting for locals to get in shape. Personally it provided him with employment in the wake of the Canterbury quake that destroyed the gym he worked at in central Christchurch. Among his keen membership are local sharemilking couple James and Ceri Bourke who have been dedicated members for the past year. James first started visiting the gym after having some back problems through the farming season, and soon found the exercises and advice from Allan made a lot of difference. “James went along to get fitter and stronger for calving, and I decided to go along as well,” says Ceri. “We thought over calving we would have to give the gym a miss, but we enjoyed it so much we fitted it into our day, going along around midday when most of our jobs were done.” She describes their three-times-a-week routine as “a bit of everything”, mixing up strength training and free weights with cardio to keep a good variety of muscles, including the heart, well exercised.”
Feeling the benefits

Over a relatively short time the couple are feeling the benefits of the regular exercise. Ceri has just run her first 10km event, and James has worked through the dairy season with an “ache free” back, strengthened by the regular exercises.

Allan says the couple have proven to be particularly dedicated and helped generate interest in visiting the gym among other farmers.

“Often you find it’s the wives or partners who get things started. It used to be that you would not get blokes interested in going to a gym, but that’s all changed and the guys here have really got into it.”

Clearing the head

With times difficult on many dairy farms, Allan says he can sometimes detect tension in people coming into the gym. He is pleased to be able to provide the advice and means to help them focus on their health and take some time to think about themselves rather than the farm.

“People can see the value of what they are doing and feeling better. They can cope with pressure better. As well as the health benefits, it’s a chance to get off the farm and mingle with other people.”

Ceri says she and James enjoy being able to do something together that does not involve the farm. Allan’s relaxed attitude means they can bring along their three girls Kara, Kate and Charlotte.

“I think over time it will become something they will see mum and dad doing, and it will just become part of their routine as they grow up,” says Allan.

Ceri enjoys the hour spent there where she is not having to make decisions and can clear her head.

“It does help. You might be having a bad day and you come away having got things in perspective.”

Allan says the gym is well on its way to serving its purpose not only for him, but for the small farming community.

“After the earthquake I needed something to generate some income, and it’s doing that. For the people around here, we are providing a service they enjoy. It’s interesting, despite tougher times on the farm, I don’t think we have lost any members due to that. They all still enjoy what coming here does for them.”

Tips for building exercise and good eating habits into your day:

- Take every chance to move – go for a bike ride or kick a ball with the kids, walk round the farm instead of taking the ute, dig the garden, join the local touch team or go for a run with a mate. It’s easier if it’s something you really enjoy – and every little bit adds up.

- Variety is the spice – mix it up, try different types of exercise or a new sport – you might find one you never knew you liked.

- Use exercise as an opportunity to connect socially with friends and family members – this works for meal times as well.

- Prioritise exercise and schedule it into your day.

- Eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods from different food groups, starting with a good breakfast.

- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen bench and in the dairy or farm office.

- Find a training partner, this makes you accountable to them, as well as yourself.

- Set goals that really mean something to you – they don’t have to be training-related. Could be anything from a decrease in blood lipid count, to achieving eight hours of sleep a night.

- Share training goals and completed sessions publicly: for many people this helps increase the chance they’ll stick to their exercise routine.

- Start off making small improvements, and gradually build intensity. Being active and eating well will soon become a habit.
Pasture: the answer to reducing costs

By utilising all pasture grown on farm, New Zealand dairy farmers can reduce their cost of production and ultimately their bottom line.

DairyNZ’s Pasture First: Revising your System workshops are being run nationwide through to the end of May to help farmers achieve this. The workshops are the first in a series of Pasture First initiatives, providing farmers with timely information to help them grow and utilise more grass.

DairyNZ general manager of research and development, Dr David McCall says the key factor in making milk at lower cost is to utilise all pasture grown on farm.

“Spring is the ‘make money’ season and now, in autumn, is when we start to set up for that period by ensuring we have sufficient pasture cover at calving and body condition score targets are met,” says David.

“Supplementary feed use can be targeted for this time. This strategy allows feed cover to build rapidly and produces body condition gain. Long autumn and winter rotations roll the feed forward to provide spring cover.”

“The goal should be to rely only on pasture in spring. If you are feeding supplement, it is at the expense of grazing less expensive pasture, which is then wasted.”

“If we are not grazing right in spring it can affect the rest of the year.”

The Pasture First workshops are aimed at helping farmers get a true picture of whether they are set up for the important spring period.

“We’ve been stepping farmers through their pasture eaten figures and also helping them identify whether there is room for improvement and different strategies to achieve that.”

“DairyNZ’s knowledge from research and modelling shows that reliance on grazed pasture underpins profitability of dairy farms, especially at lower milk prices. While suitably priced supplements can be useful to fill pasture deficits for periods when pasture growth is less than cow demand, it pays to minimise the length of these deficit periods at low milk prices.”
Ngatea dairy farmers Michael and Megan Webster are a good example of farmers who have focused their efforts on pasture management resulting in 1t DM/ha more pasture eaten over a season.

They slightly increased stocking rate but used more pasture resulting in less need for supplementary feed, saving them an estimated $300/ha. So how did they achieve this?

From calving until Dec 31, 2015

- Cow numbers increased slightly from 612 to 630.
- They used 0.8t DM/ha DM less supplement than for the same period in 2014 (175t DM less total supplement used, 270kg DM less per cow).
- This supplement was replaced by an estimated 1.06t DM/ha extra pasture grazed by the herd.
- Milksolids production compared with the same period in 2014 increased by 5000kg; MS per cow/day was not impacted.
- Estimates of the difference in pasture growth between the two seasons suggest that slightly more pasture (+2kg DM/ha/day) was grown in 2015 but this only explains 40 percent of the additional pasture use.
- The reduction in supplements used is estimated to have saved around $300/ha.

So what was different about the way pastures were managed?

Firstly, more attention was paid to monitoring pasture cover and growth, and making decisions based on that information. This was reinforced by the Websters and their staff visiting two high performing farmers in the district to get a picture of what good pasture management looked like.

A weekly farm walk became a priority for planning and monitoring of pasture and planning use of nitrogen fertiliser.

As a result, the staff became more engaged in the target grazing residuals, the spring rotation plans, and rotation lengths when collecting the cows for milking. DairyNZ’s Paddock Guide to Grazing Management in Spring was used to guide this.

Strong decision rules about the use of supplements were put in place with careful definition of what role they were playing.

In addition the Websters were also getting a return on previous investment in pasture improvement through re-grassing.

Pasture First workshops

What is my pasture eaten? Can I harvest more pasture and what is it worth? What does this mean for my system, stock numbers and supplement use?

DairyNZ’s Pasture First: Reviewing Your System workshops are providing answers to these questions to help farmers reduce their costs over the long term.

Farmers will have the opportunity to review their pasture harvest figures and get realistic benchmarks for their location. They will also get a good overview of different pasture strategies that will work best for their farm.

The workshops started in April and will run through to the end of May.

Visit dairynz.co.nz/pasturefirst.
DAY ONE: WHAT IS DRIVING CHANGE IN GLOBAL MARKETS
Tuesday 17th May 8am-4.20pm followed by networking

8am REGISTRATION – TEA, COFFEE & MUFFINS

8.50am WELCOME
Michael Spaans, DairyNZ chairman

9am What is happening in global markets and what that means for New Zealand dairy farmers.
Tim Hunt, Rabobank head of food and agribusiness research and advisory

9.30am Trade and opportunities for dairy in a fast moving and changing environment
Mike Petersen, New Zealand special agricultural trade envoy

10am Farmer Q&A for previous sessions

10.30am MORNING TEA

DAY ONE WORKSHOPS
– each workshop will run twice. You can attend TWO from the list of three workshops. (1 – 3)

11am WORKSHOP 1

11.45am WORKSHOP 2

12.30pm LUNCH

1.30pm What our dairy industry needs to excel at to succeed
Theo Spierings, Fonterra chief executive officer

2pm Winning the hearts and minds of global customers
Jacqueline Chow, Fonterra chief operating officer – velocity

2.30pm Farmer Q&A for previous sessions

3pm AFTERNOON TEA

3.30pm The government’s views on the future of dairying in New Zealand
Bill English, Deputy Prime Minister

4,20pm Networking drinks and finger-food

6.30pm Close

DAY ONE WORKSHOPS – you can attend two from the three listed

1. What do overseas customers want from our milk and what are they willing to pay for?
What premium are consumers willing to pay? How far down the value chain is it worth going? Learn what value customers place on added value, based on research findings.
Carolyn Saunders, Lincoln University professor and director of its Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit (AERU)

2. How do you add value to milk? A panel discussion
A panel discuss their perspectives on value add and how they make it work for their companies. Where do they see the future for value add and what part do farmers play in that?
Richard Wyeth, Miraka chief executive officer
Paul McGilvary, Tatua chief executive officer
Laurie Margrain, Open Country Dairy chairman
Peter Cullinane, Lewis Road Creamery founder
Grant Watson, Fonterra director of global foodservice

3. Genetic modification – should it be part of our future?
As a country we have decided ‘no’ to genetic modification, but what is the impact of it on New Zealand’s positioning as clean and green? Jacqueline will present the facts and give a balanced view on genetic modification, from opportunities for system efficiencies to the concerns and unknowns.
Jacqueline Rowarth, Waikato University professor of agribusiness

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY
www.dairynz.co.nz/farmersforum

17-18 MAY 2016
MYSTERY CREEK EVENTS CENTRE, HAMILTON

The forum is free to levy-paying dairy farmers and their staff.

Registrations are essential. dairynz.co.nz/farmersforum

Hear from Bill English, Theo Spierings and many more!

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DAY TWO: NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES

Wednesday 18th May 8am–4.30pm

8am REGISTRATION — TEA, COFFEE & MUFFINS

8.50am Converting the opportunities
Tim Mackle, DairyNZ chief executive

9,10am KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Zespri bouncing back — a case study of adapting to adversity and key learnings
Simon Limmer, Zespri International chief operating officer
Ian Greaves, kiwifruit grower

9,50am MORNING TEA

10.20am Adapting now — pasture first
David McCall, DairyNZ GM research and development

DAY TWO MORNING WORKSHOPS — you can attend two from the four listed

A1 Living a pasture first strategy
We often hear that New Zealand farmers are grass farmers, but are we really? This workshop discusses recent changes in the dairy industry that have greatly affected the resilience of our farming systems as well as the key factors to making a pasture first strategy work.
John Roche, DairyNZ principal scientist

A2 Is $3/kg MS FWE doable? The ingredients to success
Farmers give their perspective on the key ingredients to operate at $3/kg MS. Find out how they have set up their systems to run at a consistently low farm working expenses (FWE) level.
Waikato and Bay of Plenty farmers
Wima Roster, DairyNZ senior consulting officer

A3 Making rosters work for employers and employees
The Roster Builder tool makes rostering easier. Set up rosters to benefit staff and managers through visibility of total working hours and a minimum wage audit trail. Chris Lewis will explain how they use the Roster Builder tool and the benefits.
Chris Lewis, Waikato Federated Farmers president and vice national dairy chairman
Jane Muir, DairyNZ people team leader

A4 Implementing the lean management process on dairy farms
The lean management process optimises operational efficiencies and empowers staff. The system eliminates wasted time, money and space. Farmers Paul and Juanita Marshall have successfully adopted the lean management approach on their farm — find out what a difference it has made for them.
Sarah Watson, DairyNZ FarmTune project manager
Paul and Juanita Marshall, Southland dairy farmers

DAY TWO AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS — you can attend two from the four listed

B1 Growing better quality and more persistent pastures
Profitable, pasture-first dairy businesses rely on a strong foundation of productive pastures. Yet, until recently, it has been impossible to put an economic value on the pillars of productive pastures: yield, quality and persistence. This workshop will explain what that value is, where it comes from and how farmers can capture more of it.
Dave Chapman, DairyNZ principal scientist
Cameron Ludemann, DairyNZ forage value manager

B2 Breeding better cows
Find out about the key principles of genetic improvement and how you can accelerate genetic gain in your herd to help deliver a better bottom line.
Melissa Stephen, DairyNZ genetic evaluation developer

B3 New technologies for reducing nutrient losses
A look into the future — what are some of the ideas in the pipeline to help farms decrease losses of nutrients to the environment, while remaining productive and profitable? A chance to learn about some of the research that is important for our future.
Mark Shepherd, AgResearch senior scientist (land and environment)
Diana Selbie, AgResearch scientist (land and environment)

B4 Lessons from overseas — farmers adapting to regulatory changes
Sharon will share insights gained during her 2015 Nuffield travels where she looked at the ways producers have coped with some of the multiple constraints they face. This session will inspire with real-life examples of how farmers overseas have adapted themselves and their farm businesses. Farmers attending will learn ways in which they can develop their own ‘change-ability’.
Sharon Morrell, DairyNZ Bay of Plenty regional leader
Animal welfare is at the heart of any good farming business. It becomes even more important during hectic times such as calving that responsibility for the wellbeing of calves starts at birth and continues beyond the farm gate.

A focus on caring for calves is underway with a number of staff training events and farmer resources available to ensure best practice handling and management of bobby calves this season. Planning, preparation and team training will contribute to a successful and smoother calving season.

In association with veterinarians across the country, DairyNZ has launched a 1½ hour Bobby Calf Focus workshop for owners and managers on supply chain awareness, responsibilities, fit for transport and good practice. Over 50 events are being held around the country during May and June, providing plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Making sure bobby calves are fit for transport is a key focus this season. A poster for the calf shed is now available (see sidebar) with a visual eight-point checklist as a reminder to ensure calves are at least four days old before transport (measured from arrival at the shed) and are healthy, fit and fed.

There are also guidelines available around calf loading facilities. The collection point should not be on the roadside as it’s potentially hazardous to truck drivers, farm staff and other road users.

Talk to your transporter about how to make loading calves easier for everyone. If you don’t have raised calf loading facilities, being available to help your transporter will ensure that calves are handled with care.

Another training opportunity coming up during June and July will be available for the whole farm team under the DairyNZ-led CalvingSmart programme. The full day event offers different sessions based on levels of experience and covers areas like reducing stress and developing practical skills. CalvingSmart is a great opportunity to enhance your knowledge and skills to help you and your team have a successful calving season.

Further information on events, calf care, fit for transport and loading facilities can be found at dairynz.co.nz/calves.
Caring for calves resources
DairyNZ is offering a range of resources and events to help improve your calving season.

For tips, resources and practical advice:
dairynz.co.nz/calves

Free Bobby Calf Focus and CalvingSmart training events:
dairynz.co.nz/events

If you need further information, call the DairyNZ farmer information service:
Freephone 0800 2 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969)

Have your say
The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has opened a public consultation proposing new animal welfare regulations which will turn existing minimum standards into rules, including the care and handling of bobby calves. The regulations introduce new penalties and fines to deal with offences more effectively. MPI held public meetings around the country between 27 April – 3 May, however dairy farmers still have an opportunity to have their say. Submissions close on 19 May 2016.

Visit mpi.govt.nz/consultations

Are your bobby calves fit for transport?
Tick all eight to leave the gate:

1. Four days old
2. Ears up and eyes bright
3. Correct eartag
4. Dry navel
5. No scours
6. Firm, worn hooves
7. Standing and walking
8. Full tummy – no antibiotic milk

A Fit for transport poster for the calving shed will be included with June’s Inside Dairy and available at dairynz.co.nz/bobbycalves.

DairyNZ, the Meat Industry Association, Federated Farmers, the Road Transport Forum, the New Zealand Petfood Manufacturers Association, the Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand, the New Zealand Veterinary Association and the Ministry of Primary Industries have made a joint commitment to stamp out any mistreatment of calves. Providing resources, guidelines and training events are an important step in ensuring we care for our calves. Not only is it good for your farm, it’s also good for the industry.
Farming and the Health and Safety at Work Act

The new Health and Safety at Work Act came into force on April 4. WorkSafe’s agriculture programme manager Al McCone explains what farmers need to know.

At its heart, the new law is about identifying work risks and creating a culture of risk management.

What do farmers need to know?

Health and safety is about identifying and managing risks. The new law does not require the elimination of all risks at any cost. That’s not realistic and not what WorkSafe New Zealand expects. And it doesn’t have to mean a whole lot more paperwork.

Who is responsible for health and safety?

Everyone has a role to play in keeping farms safe, with different levels of responsibility.

The primary duty of care falls to what the law calls the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (or PCBU). The PCBU will almost always be a business, and in the agriculture sector that will include farmers.

Employees also need to take responsibility for acting in a safe and healthy way. For example, this means using the right gear, following proper health and safety processes and planning how to do a task safely when a situation changes.

Manage your risks

Businesses need to identify health and safety risks on-farm and do what is ‘reasonably practicable’ to eliminate or manage them.
This includes risks associated with the use of machinery, vehicles, agri-chemicals and the challenges of working safely around animals. You are only responsible for what you can reasonably influence and control.

**When is a farm a workplace?**

Farmers have a duty to manage workplace risks in the following areas:
- Farm buildings and immediate surrounding areas (whether or not work is going on at the time).
- Other parts of the farm, where work is being carried out.
  In those areas you’re responsible for the health and safety of your employees and others, and for managing the risks that you can reasonably control.

The law is clear that the farmhouse is not a workplace.

**What about visitors on farms?**

Employees, contractors, vets, and recreational visitors, such as hunters and trampers, can be on your land at any given time.

The approach is just the same for visitors venturing into farm buildings and immediate surrounding areas, and areas on the farm where work is being carried out. In these cases you owe a duty to the visitors, just as you do to your workers.

But, if you couldn’t be expected to know that someone is going to be on your farm, it’s not reasonable to expect that you have the same level of care for their safety. Also, if someone is on your farm for an unlawful purpose you can’t be held responsible if there is an incident.

One exception would be if some work had recently been carried out creating a risk even though no-one was still working there, e.g. recent spraying of agri-chemicals that may still be in the air. In these situations you need to think about how to reasonably manage this for visitors and others.

**Working together with employees**

The Health and Safety at Work Act also introduces a requirement on all businesses to engage with their workers on health and safety matters. That engagement will vary from business to business, but there needs to be meaningful discussion with employees.

As well as asking employees for feedback on specific questions, all businesses need to have clear, well known ways for workers to raise suggestions or issues on a day-to-day basis. It doesn’t have to be complicated. A morning chat covering off the working day ahead and any risks involved is a great place to start. Adding health and safety as a permanent agenda item for regular team meetings is another way to ensure employees are involved.
Communication in challenging times

In challenging times, communication can become crucially important in relationships – both personal and at work. DairyNZ people management specialist Rose McVeagh explains.

No one likes having difficult conversations and sometimes, our natural reaction is to shut down and protect ourselves, rather than open up. By shutting down and choosing not to communicate, several things happen.

- No one knows what’s happening for us, they can’t read our minds.
- People know instinctively that something is wrong, they start guessing what it is (and are usually wrong).
- They respond without empathy and without understanding, which doesn’t help.

By opening up, the opposite happens. The people around us start to understand, can share our concerns, offer support or respond with suggestions.

Here are a few tips that could be used for talking with staff (or the other half).

Be courageous: If the message is difficult but it needs to be said, be brave.

Be clear: Think about the key points you need to make. Don’t beat around the bush.

Be empathetic: Think about how the message may be received; genuine kindness goes a long way.

Be honest: Don’t be afraid to say what you honestly feel or think.

Be appropriate: Pick the right time, place and think about who is within earshot.

Look forward: Keep focused on solutions for what’s coming up.

Support for tricky communication situations:

- Rural support trust – 0800 787 254
- depression.org.nz – 0800 111 757
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment – 0800 20 90 20 (employment relations free advice line)
- Federated Farmers advice line 0800 FARMING or 0800 327 646 (free for members)
Attention to detail key to pasture renewal success

Being methodical and paying attention to detail has helped Morrinsville farmer Aaron Price walk away with the top prize in a recent pasture renewal competition.

Aaron, a 50:50 sharemilker, won best first year pasture in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty Pasture Renewal Persistence Competition run by the DairyNZ-led Pasture Renewal Leadership Group.

The 2015 Waikato Sharemilker of the Year who milks 244 cows on the 80ha (effective) farm put his victory down to “paying attention to detail, following each step and doing it properly”.

“Don’t over complicate things but don’t miss any step. You miss one step and you pay the consequences.”

Aaron, 30, is hugely disciplined with farm walks and conscientiously measures and records paddock pasture covers and residuals throughout the year. One of the competition’s judges, DairyNZ developer Sally Peel, says Aaron’s perseverance means he has amassed three years of detailed and valuable information during his time on the property.

“Aaron knows intimately his best and worst paddock yields and uses this information to aid regrassing decisions and evaluate the performance of his new pasture.”

Aaron’s winning paddock was regrassed in March last year after he identified it as poorly performing with low ryegrass density. With careful preparation, he regrassed with a mix of Trojan perennial ryegrass, Kotare and Weka white clovers, Safin cocksfoot and Tuscan red clover and the endophyte NEA2. He maintains a 1500kg DM/ha residual for optimum pasture quality. From mid-November to February the paddock is irrigated to ensure the best return on the re-grassing.

Pasture renewal is a big priority on the farm as Aaron strives to get poorly performing paddocks up to scratch.

“The last three years we’ve been regrassing about 15 percent of the farm. We will probably drop that back to 12 percent as we have improved the paddocks considerably.”

Ensuring quality pastures is a no brainer for Aaron: “Pasture is our cheapest feed on the farm and it’s important to maximise what we get from it. And regrassing is a significant cost so we have to get the full benefit from it.”

Aaron leads pasture renewal on the farm himself because he doesn’t want to be reliant on busy contractors.

“Sometimes you have to wait for contractors as they are so busy. Doing it yourself you can be sure of getting the timing correct. A two week delay means two weeks of wasted growth.”

In the summer/autumn period when he is making decisions about regrassing, he always consults the Forage Value Index (FVI) via the DairyNZ website. He says it’s invaluable and will only become more beneficial as it gets more data behind it.

Aaron and the other winner, Noldy Rust of Te Pahu, who won best pasture three years or older, hosted field days in February and each won $1500 of pasture renewal products from Agriseeds and Agricom.
Update to the *Inside Dairy* mailing list

We’ve changed a few things with our Inside Dairy mailing list. If your mailing details aren’t quite right, you’ve received too many copies or you’d like extra copies for your team – please let us know. Email info@dairynz.co.nz or phone 0800 4 DAIRYNZ (0800 4 324 7969). If you’ve shifted, you can also let us know your new address by visiting dairynz.co.nz/address. We’re working hard to continually improve our mailing list – and your help is very much appreciated.

**Moving on 1 June?**

Are you moving dairy cattle on 1 June? Make sure you call OSPRI on 0800 482 463 to get sorted for NAIT and TBfree. They’ll help you update your contact details, change your farm location and help you record any animal movements for NAIT.

**Look out for velvetleaf on your farm**

Velvetleaf, a serious cropping pest, has been found in fodder beet crops in the South Island and the Waikato. Those farmers who sowed fodder beet this season are encouraged to check their crop for velvetleaf. It’s important farmers remain on the look-out and keep checking their fodder beet crops until it has been grazed. Late germinating plants have been found in crops that have previously been inspected.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is investigating the issue.

**If you find velvetleaf**

Photograph it, mark its location (so it can be found again easily) and immediately call MPI on its free hotline – 0800 80 99 66. Do not remove any plants, as this could risk seed being spread.

For more information visit mpi.govt.nz/velvetleaf

**Getting your feedback**

Through May and June we will be conducting our annual telephone survey where we ask farmers for feedback on how well we are doing our job. We are always looking to see how we can improve and this survey is a valuable source of information for us on our performance. So if you get a call and take the survey, we appreciate your help.

**Dairy Industry Award winners**

Congratulations to the regional Dairy Industry Award winners around the country – you’ve done your industry proud. The 33 finalists represent 11 regions and will compete for prizes worth more than $165,000 and the honour of winning either the 2016 New Zealand Share Farmer of the Year, 2016 New Zealand Dairy Manager of the Year or the 2016 New Zealand Dairy Trainee of the Year title. The winners will be announced at a black tie awards dinner in Wellington on Saturday May 14. Congratulations also to the regional winners of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards who have been announced at events throughout April and May.
That’s a wrap for Tactics farmers

Dairy farmers nationwide stepped up to the plate to help others as part of DairyNZ’s Tactics campaign. Over the past 18 months, 29 host farmers shared knowledge and on-farm data at events and online to help others respond to the low milk price. Wrap-up events are currently taking place.

North Waikato farmer Andrew McGiven says the Tactics events helped spark valuable discussion.

Meanwhile, Westport farmer Colin van der Geest, who held two well-attended field days at his Aratika property, says sharing information and hearing from the experts was helpful. He only wished he could have hosted more events.

Discussion valued

Andrew McGiven is a Tactics farmer at Waihou in north Waikato. Andrew says the Tactics events were successful in getting a discussion going and that he still chews the fat with neighbouring farmers on a regular basis.

Andrew and his contract milker Graham Wallace have a high input system, but given the current environment, Andrew says this may have to change.

“In the next two to three years, we have to change our strategy, make changes to our system and destock,” says Andrew, whose higher input system is mainly due to the local climate, which is prone to drought.

“At the moment there are no visible signs of eczema, which is a bonus,” says Andrew.

Getting back to basics the key to success

Doing the basics well and keeping costs to a minimum is the secret in times like this says Colin, who has worked hard over the past year to collect pasture data. He found he hadn’t been harvesting pasture as efficiently as he might have been.

“As a result of this exercise, we have been able to lift our stocking rate and we are trying to turn as much of the grass into milk as we can,” says Colin.

“To reduce costs, we have cut our inputs and only use palm kernel (PKE) strategically to fill the gaps. Sticking to a solid feed budget is part of our back to basics approach. We are also looking at leasing a block next door for grazing young stock which will reduce our costs long-term.”

Since Christmas, Colin has reduced staff by one and switched to milking once a day (OAD). Milking OAD has reduced production by 0.1kg/per cow/per day but has improved cow condition, which in turn will lead to improved mating performance going into next season. Colin says it has reduced stress levels considerably and also enabled them to catch up on all the farm jobs.

Colin will host a final field day on May 31. For details visit dairynz.co.nz/events.

For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/tactics.
DairyNZ runs a wide variety of farm system discussion groups, field days and specialist events. For the full list of what’s on near you, visit dairynz.co.nz/events.

### MAY EVENTS

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#### NORTHLAND

Community dinners for farmers, their families and staff will be held in Dargaville on May 19 and Waimamaku on June 1.

The free dinner, organised as a collaboration of the Northland branches of national organisations, will provide farmers with the opportunity to get off-farm, catch up with others in their area and engage in conversation.

For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/events.

#### BAY OF PLENTY

Discussion groups in May and June will continue to focus on pasture management. Pasture First workshops over the last month have focused on helping farmers calculate a figure for pasture eaten and provided strategies to help improve on that figure.

Groups in the next month will help farmers decide on a pasture cover target at calving and balance dates and ensure they have a plan to achieve that.

For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/events.

#### SOUTH WAIKATO

How the global environment will shape the future of New Zealand milk production and ways farmers can adapt to current challenges is the focus of this year’s DairyNZ Farmers’ Forum.

Being held May 17-18 at Mystery Creek in Hamilton, the forum will help farmers look at where they can give their farm businesses a lift.

DairyNZ strategy and investment leader for sustainability Rick Pridmore says the Farmers’ Forum is about helping farmers understand what is driving the current financial climate and what they can do to help manage it. For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/farmersforum.

#### LOWER NORTH ISLAND

The Dairy Industry Awards, for which DairyNZ is a sponsor, is holding its national awards dinner in Wellington on May 14.

Regional winners will be in the running for the national prizes including Dairy Manager of the Year, Dairy Trainee of the Year and Share Farmer of the Year.

For more information visit dairyindustryawards.co.nz.
TARANAKI

Sarah Payne has joined the Taranaki team as a senior consulting officer for central Taranaki. Sarah was a consulting officer for DairyNZ in North Waikato before travelling to England and working for LIC as a private farm consultant for two years.

She is looking forward to returning to Taranaki, her hometown, and working with dairy farmers in the region.

For information on events in Sarah’s area visit dairy.nz.co.nz/events.

WEST COAST/TOP OF SOUTH

The Marlborough Monitor Farm project is coming to a close on Jason and Amber Templeman’s property near Picton. A final field day on May 5 will provide a summary of the project and a look at some of the changes the Templemans have made.

The Templemans have been the monitor farmers for the region since 2012. Regular field days provided farmers with data and information which they could use to help make their own decisions. For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/events.

CANTERBURY/NORTH OTAGO

A shout out to Kaikoura dairy farmers for their enthusiastic response to the Sustainable Milk Plans offer.

Under Canterbury’s Land & Water Regional Plan, most dairy farmers will need a farm environment plan to obtain new resource consent.

Since the offer went out at the end of February, all dairy farmers in the area have signed up. DairyNZ is now working with a range of farm consultants to implement the process.

For further information visit dairynz.co.nz/canterbury.

SOUTHLAND/SOUTH OTAGO

A series of Pasture First workshops will help farmers make strategic decisions around setting cow numbers and cover other key management decisions that contribute to growing and using as much home-grown pasture as possible.

Farmers will have a chance to work out their pasture harvest figures and see how that compares to a regional benchmark. Different pasture strategies will also be discussed. For more information visit dairy.nz.co.nz/events.

DAIRYNZ CONSULTING OFFICERS

Northland
Regional Leader Chris Neill 027 499 9021
Far North Graeme Peter 027 807 9686
Lower Northland Mark Forsyth 021 242 5719
Whangarei West Corey Thor 027 886 0221

North Waikato
Regional Leader Phil Irvine 027 483 9820
South Auckland Jamie Haultain 027 486 4344
Hamilton North Jaimee Morgan 021 245 8055
Matamata/Kereone Brigitte Ravera 027 807 9685
 Morrinsville/Paeroa Aaron Traynor 027 293 4401
Hauraki Plains/Coromandel Phil Irvine 027 483 9820

Bay of Plenty
Regional Leader Sharon Morrell 027 492 2907
Western Bay of Plenty Kim Reid 021 225 8345
Central Bay of Plenty Kevin McKinley 027 288 8238
Central Plateau Wilma Foster 021 246 2147
Whakatane Juliet Reti-Kaukau 027 593 4123

Taranaki
Regional Leader Katrina Knowles 021 831 944
South Taranaki Erin Hutchinson 021 246 5663
Central Taranaki Sarah Payne 021 287 7057
Coastal Taranaki Michelle Taylor 021 276 5832
North Taranaki Lauren Mc Eldowney 027 593 4122

Lower North Island
Regional Leader James Muwunganirwa 027 499 9020
Horowhenua/Wanganui/South Taranaki/Southern and Coastal Manawatu Scott Cameron 027 702 3760
Wairarapa Leo Hendrikse 021 286 4346
Tararua/Manawatu Abby Scott 021 244 3428
Southern Hawke’s Bay/Central/Northern Manawatu/Rangitikei Julie Morris 021 222 9023

Top of South Island/Westland
Regional Leader Wade Bell 027 285 9273
Nelson Marlborough Wade Bell 027 285 9273
West Coast Ross Bishop 021 277 2894

Canterbury/North Otago
Regional Leader Virginia Serra 021 932 515
Hurstown Virginia Serra 021 932 515
North Canterbury Jo Back 021 246 2775
Mid Canterbury Erin Christian 021 243 7337
Central Canterbury Natalia Benquet 021 287 7059
South Canterbury Caleb Strowger 027 593 4124
North Otago Trevor Ge 021 227 6476

Southland/South Otago
Regional Leader Richard Kyte 021 246 3166
Central Southland Richard Kyte 021 246 3166
SouthWest Otago Guy Michaels 021 615 051
Northern/Eastern Southland Thomas Paterson 021 240 8529
Western Southland Monique Topham 027 702 2219
Southern/costal Southland Nathan Nelson 021 227 6931

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For the full programme see pg 14-15

Hear from Bill English, Theo Spierings and many more!