PICTURE THIS
BETTER PHOTOS & VIDEO WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

A GUIDE FOR FARMERS
EVERY VIDEO & PHOTO TELLS A STORY

It used to be that the only way to take photographs and videos was with a camera, often equipment that was big and heavy.

Today, just about everyone takes photos and videos with light-weight, but technologically loaded, smartphones – and there are endless apps to also help improve your photos/videos, and share them.

I am John Slater, a professional photographer, and I’m excited to share with you tips and techniques to turn the good photos and videos you take on your smartphone camera into great. The opinions and recommendations that follow are mine, based on years of photography in New Zealand and internationally.

I hope you find this guidebook helpful in creating photos and videos that are, quite simply, out of the ordinary!

Following the tips in this guide, I took this selfie leaning on a ladder, (out of shot). I had a phone in my hand as a prop. The background was softened and the edges of the frame darkened slightly using in camera and downloaded apps. For a bit of fun, I superimposed an image on to the phone.
Welcome to Picture This, brought to you by DairyNZ as part of our work to help increase awareness of the good things dairy farmers are doing.

You’re right on the spot to capture photos and video that will provide real-time insights into your care and respect for the environment you work and live in, and for your people and animals.

As that old adage ‘every picture tells a thousand words’ indicates, your great images will help create better perceptions of dairy farming amongst the general public. There’s also a section telling you where you can share your work.

Picture This is the third booklet in DairyNZ’s series of guides helping farmers to tell their stories. It works as a companion piece to the Social Media 101 guide and the Sharing Your Stories guide.

Copies of all guidebooks are available on request by emailing info@dairynz.co.nz Picture This and Social Media 101 are also available as downloads – go to dairynz.co.nz/socialmedia and dairynz.co.nz/picture-this
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For further advice, email info@dairynz.co.nz.
GET TO KNOW & LOVE YOUR PHONE

Common smartphone camera features
It can take still images and make videos/movies.
You can set the shape (format) of your images before or after shooting.
With it you can:
• take dramatic panorama shots
• make time lapse sequences
• take pictures in very low light
• make animations
• change colours
• combine photos,
• and much more.

Keep the lens clean
The lens on your phone has no protection. A dirty lens will give you blurred images. Clean it regularly. Try the special ‘one-time’ cleaning tissues available from opticians and camera shops.

Two ways
You can simply record – daily events, the things you see, holidays and events. Turn on the camera and click; nine times out of 10 you’ll have a decent result.
Or you can get creative. You’ll need to learn about your camera’s features and probably line up a few apps – then get to know how to use them.

Some technical stuff
Choose the best possible quality/resolution for still images – just in case you produce a stunning one that someone wants in high definition for a magazine cover or a poster.
The higher the quality/resolution of the image, the more pixels there are. Pixels are the tiny squares that make up a digital image. Lots of pixels are needed for printing in order to avoid grainy, blocky looking pictures, but not so important if shooting for social media as low-quality settings still give good results on a phone screen or monitor.

Picture quality/resolution is found in Settings. For most Apple phones (iPhones), known as iOS devices (I Operating System), go to iOS > Home page > Settings; most other phones are Androids – for these go to Camera App > Settings.

For more about pixels:
https://www.ultimate-photo-tips.com/what-is-a-pixel.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf3_ZW2pJhk
And a bit more techy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15aqFQQVBWU
Factory settings may not be optimal; however, you can’t go wrong if you choose the most pixels available. The most pixels available on a phone will be around 4:3 12m (megapixels).

If you want to change the shape of your photo, you can do this either in-phone or by transferring to your computer. Choose 16:9 for viewing on your TV as this is same aspect ratio as most TV screens. For Instagram fans, a square 1:1 may be the best choice.

**That shutter button**

We all know to press the button to take a picture, or start a video recording. Your phone may also allow you to trigger the button with your voice by saying ‘cheese’, ‘capture’ or ‘shoot’.

For selfies, usually taken one-handed, simply waving your hand, or somebody else's, in front of the lens will often trigger the shutter.

For video, saying 'record video' can do the trick, but you may have to press the button to stop.

**Video settings**

If you want to watch your work on a TV screen, start with FHD (Full High Definition). To post online, for example to You Tube, the lower resolution of HD 1280 x 720 will work fine.

Videos are best recorded in landscape mode (phone on its side).

**Lots of apps available**

Cameras on smartphones are very good, and can be supported by apps available from App Store and Play Store. Many are free. Have a look at Camera FV-5 and the camera app within Lightroom Mobile CC.

For editing try Lightroom Mobile CC, Snapseed and Picsart.

These videos will give you some good ideas.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67xl_3gwc-I
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8PU6RK0No4
**FUNDAMENTALS**

**Slow Down**
Taking quick snaps generally results in blurry images that are of little value. While many new phones have Optical Image Stabilisation (OIS) that helps, pause before clicking the shutter to ensure what you see on the screen is in focus. Hold your phone with both hands.

**Better results in poor light**
In poor light the camera shutter remains open longer. A tripod with a phone holder will keep it steady, or find a wall or a fence to put it on. Also try some manual settings to increase the shutter speed – See Tip 13.

**Keep the horizon straight**
Crooked horizon lines bring disorder to a photo. To rectify manually, use the embedded grid as a guide, or the crop tool. Also, there are apps to automatically straighten your photos.

**Don't confuse blurry with soft focus**
Photos can be sharp and soft at the same time – the details are clear, but the image has a soft glow around it. Often used in wedding photos, this effect is achieved after the photo is taken using an in-phone tool or an app.

This image was achieved using Gaussian Blur in Photoshop but try the Glow tool in the free app Snapseed. The wire fence was removed using the Healing tool in the same app.
# CROPPING & SPACE

## Don't be afraid to frame or crop images

Taking a photo is just the start. You can change the format by cropping the photo. Here is an example – Jared Watson and his father Kent on the family farm in Opotiki – same picture: one uncropped and the other cropped to make it tighter, drawing the eye in.

However, space can be important for some images, including giving balance, and providing room for text – often useful if you would like your images to be published.

Note, you cannot crop video. Before you shoot, make sure the format suits your purpose; your subject correctly positioned.

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Most amateur photographers have the main subject too small. If you can’t move closer, use a different format at the taking stage, or crop tight. Sometimes chopping off heads and limbs works, and makes for a more dynamic image.
VIEWPOINT

Bend those knees
Try different positions when taking photos, rather than a normal standing position. The same applies to video. Next time the All Blacks play, watch how the cameraman gets low to the ground to film the haka. This changes perspective, making the players look taller and bigger. Get low when photographing children and animals too.

Move your subject
When you direct a video, you ask your subject to move in a certain way. Do the same with still photos. Don’t be afraid to direct, or position, your subjects to create a better, more balanced photo.

For this photo, getting on the ground and up close eliminated the distracting environment and helped emphasise the importance of the pasture.
LEADING LINES

Good photos engage the viewer. Leading lines are a great technique to do this, with obvious lines being roads, railway tracks and rivers. Less obvious is the angle of the subject. Move around your subject to find the angle that helps draw in the viewer.

An effluent pond is not usually the most attractive of subjects. To make it more interesting, the camera is positioned to make a strong diagonal line leading the viewer through the picture to the milking shed. Choosing a time when the cows are leaving the shed added to the picture, as did darkening the clouds using the Burn tool, available in editing apps you can download.

Both Burn and Dodge, which lightens, are useful tools – go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWyE08XFFeQ

This shot was taken early morning in poor weather. The track with cows wends through the picture making an effective leading line. Foreground foliage adds a 3D effect.
RULE OF THIRDS

Position the subject

Frequently people put the most important subject in the middle of the frame. While this is not wrong, there is often a better alternative.

Use your Grid – Rule of Thirds

Putting the important subject towards the edge of the frame often creates a more dynamic image with better balance. This is a technique often used by artists, photographers and videographers. There’s no need to do this all of the time, but do experiment with it.

To turn on the grid – Android: Camera App > Settings > Grid lines; iPhone: Home page > Settings > Camera > Grid.

Here’s a good example of the ‘rule of thirds’. Positioning the main subject where the grid lines intersect often results in a more interesting, balanced photo.
Most cameras have a digital zoom, but use with caution, if at all. All it does is stretch the pixels to fit the space and the image suffers as a result. You’re better off to step closer to your subject, if possible.

Here are a couple of shots taken at a local creamery. The first snap isn’t bad, but there’s too much going on. Your eye wanders all around the photo.

For the second shot, I moved a couple of steps closer and crouched down a little, concentrating on what really matters for a more dynamic shot.
Not many people actually like to have their photo taken, so it’s beneficial to know what makes a good people shot.

Firstly, help people to relax – give them something relevant to the photo to do, or a prop to play with.

Lenses on smartphone cameras tend to be wide-angled, usually distorting faces into a spherical shape and giving people big noses. For this very reason the New Zealand Passport office will usually reject passport photos taken with a smartphone.

To counter this, stand no nearer than two paces from the subject. Then crop the photo to the desired shape.

To make sure the subject’s eyes are sharp don’t just rely on Autofocus. Most phones allow you to tap the screen to focus on a precise area.

And, as with most photography in New Zealand’s harsh light, try to avoid the middle of the day – crunched up eyes are not flattering.

With people, always focus on the eyes. Portrait mode on the phone has thrown the background out of focus for a pleasing 3D effect. If this is not available on your phone use Blur in a downloaded app. The overall triangular shape of the head and arms is a very strong compositional technique.
TURN OFF THE FLASH

Use Flash only when absolutely necessary. Try turning it off and using your phone’s manual settings to see if you can get sharp images, especially in low light.

Flash is a harsh directional light, seldom producing great images. Often the foreground becomes white or over exposed while the background turns black. A photo with natural light is more pleasant and natural looking. If you have to use Flash with people, move them away from any light background to avoid ugly shadows.
DATE & TIME STAMP

Whenever you take a photo, the date and time, plus other information, is embedded in the file. Sometimes it’s beneficial to show this information on the photo itself – e.g. when recording an important event, or progressive changes to pasture, etc. Some cameras have this already built-in. If not, there are plenty of choices at the App Store or the Play Store.

Note: If you tilt the back of the phone, the building will look like it’s falling over. Keep the phone/camera back straight so the building appears upright.
A special camera or great Photoshop skills used to be required for panoramic (Pano) photos. Now it’s a standard setting on most smartphones. Hold the camera upright in Portrait mode, otherwise you’ll get a long skinny image. Pano type shots are good for your Facebook homepage.

The white rectangle marks the shot with the standard lens on my phone. The bigger picture was taken with Pano. Don’t be afraid of getting some foreground in the shot.
SHARE YOUR WORK

Social media – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc – is a great way to share your photos and short videos. The DairyNZ Social Media 101 guidebook provides helpful information and tips – importantly, always know social media is a public forum, even in a closed group.

The media – both mainstream and rural – is a valuable channel for sharing photos and videos, including to illustrate information you may have given a journalist in writing, or in an interview. The DairyNZ Sharing Your Stories guidebook provides insights and recommendations.

There are also many other opportunities to have your great photography, and video work, published in the media – on TV, in print in newspapers and magazines, and online – helping to create better understanding among the general public of dairy farming.

DairyNZ’s media team can help with suggestions, or you can search online.

You’re most welcome to submit photos you feel might be of interest to other farmers to the various DairyNZ publications – Inside Dairy, Tech Series, the annual report, and information pamphlets.

Submit your work to info@dairynz.co.nz – and use this email too if you’d like to contact the media team, or order print copies of any of the guidebooks. Downloads for Social Media 101 and Picture This are at dairynz.co.nz/socialmedia and dairynz.co.nz/picture-this

Your subject matter is endless – some thoughts:

- Healthy animals munching pasture
- Animals being fed and cared for
- Appealing kids with animals
- Farmers/farm workers having a laugh
- School children – and others – visiting farms
- Quirky haylage/bale art
- Cow shed/farm buildings art
- Amazing sunrises/sunsets seen on the farm
- Incredible rural vistas
- Flourishing veggie gardens
- Bountiful fruit trees
- Great farm kitchen baking, etc.
TRY MANUAL SETTINGS

When taking snapshots with friends and family, it’s best to use the standard in settings. It’s simple and straightforward. However, there are other options using manual or pro settings.

Finding the right exposure settings

In every photo ever taken, three values control the overall exposure:

1. Shutter speed - the time the shutter is open
2. Aperture - the size of the lens opening (fixed on smartphones)
3. ISO - the sensitivity of the sensor.

In combination they determine how well the photo or video is exposed, whether moving subjects are sharp and the blurriness of the background.

To ‘freeze’ a moving subject, you can use the Sport mode (if available), or manually set it to a very fast speed. Then adjust the ISO until the preview looks good. Just be aware that the higher the ISO, the noisier (clumps of unwanted texture) your photos will be.

The shutter setting for this photo taken at the A&P show in Hastings was 1/2000th second.
Know your objective. Perhaps it is to record the construction of an effluent pond, or a new building. Work out the best day and time. Consider what apps and techniques you’ve read about here – rule of thirds, leading lines, etc – will get the best results. Above all, if people are in your photo, give them directions.

Often, you’ll need help so plan for that.

Back in Opotiki I wanted to show family values and how farming is handed down through the generations. Jared Watson suggested he and his sons, Luka (left) and Niko, lead the cows to milking. Jared’s father, Kent, released 10 cows into the raceway at a time, allowing me to take multiple photos – and, in the final, to ask Jared and his sons to look at each other.
EDITING YOUR WORK

It’s best to edit photos and videos on your computer rather than on the phone, and a good resource could be Adobe Lightroom software. However, it is perfectly feasible to edit on your phone, using either in-phone tools or downloaded apps.

Simple adjustments like lightening or darkening are straightforward, but for something more advanced use the free apps. Check out these links

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNdQbc47ZQg
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glkdg4-9B_0

So why edit?

Firstly, to dump all the rubbish images you take.

Then there’s the harsh New Zealand light. It can make images ‘contrasty’. Blacks are really black, whites really white, which is why black and white cows are hard to photograph well. An editing tool can improve your shots. If you learn one manoeuvre only, learn how to Dodge and Burn - go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWyE08XFFeQ

The first image is the original of Aimee France, assistant herd manager at the Vollebregt family farm in Wairarapa. There was a distracting green bin in the background, but rather than attempt to remove it with Photoshop (not easy on a smartphone), I blurred the background, including the bin. Then some Dodge to lightened Aimee’s face and overalls.
Here are some suggestions to help you make videos using your smartphone. With a little practice, you can record great footage.

1. A smartphone stand or tripod is the best way to ensure steady videos. If you don’t have one, lean your phone on a post to keep it still, or by balancing your elbows on a table.

2. A plug-in microphone is another useful tool for enhancing sound, but again not essential.

3. Test your lighting - find a well-lit spot outside and shoot with the light on your subject’s face, i.e. sun behind you. Take a test video and see what it looks like.

4. Even the slightest bit of wind can be picked up on your video. Find a sheltered area out of the wind and test what the sound is like.

5. Most videos will be used in landscape mode not portrait, so have your phone horizontal before pushing record, and keep it level.
Check your phone’s camera settings to see what enhancements you can make to your video. For example, on an iPhone you can turn the camera up to 60 frames per second for higher quality. (Settings > Camera > Record video)

Placing your subject off-center in the frame can give a more balanced and interesting look. Think about your background – it should be interesting but not too cluttered.

Get quite close to the person you are filming so the sound carries (without getting right in their face).

After you press record, get your subject to count silently to three before answering the first question. Same at the end – get them looking into the camera for about three seconds before you stop recording. This gives more flexibility for editing.

If you’re interviewing the subject, get them to look at you, not directly at the camera, but if they are talking/explaining something to the camera they should look at it directly.

Smartphones have decent editing options for video, and there are plenty of apps that you can download to help as well.

You might want to consider editing on your computer as the bigger screen makes the task substantially easier.

Transfer your files as soon as possible so you have them backed up. Plug your phone into your laptop/computer and download the video files onto your hard drive and/or flash drive. Don’t email the files as this will reduce quality – use a file transfer system like Dropbox or send them on a USB stick.
And, in closing:
Go online. Every phone is similar but subtly different, so if you’re keen for more tips and tricks, go exploring the Internet for what is specific to your phone make and model.

Picture This is a companion guide to the Social Media 101 and Sharing Your Stories guidebooks produced by DairyNZ for farmers. Copies of all guidebooks are available on request by emailing info@dairynz.co.nz Picture This and Social Media 101 are also available as downloads – go to dairynz.co.nz/picture-this and dairynz.co.nz/socialmedia

“It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera; they are made with the eye, heart and head.’
– Henri Cartier-Bresson