



farming people

HRL news

Hazlett Rural Limited



Simon McAlister

New categories added to HRL Farm Supplies offer

HRL Farm Supplies has had a big boost to its offering with the arrival of Simon McAlister, who started with HRL on 19 November.

Simon has brought an agricultural machinery dimension to HRL Farm Supplies, which now offers a huge range of agricultural machinery parts, accessories and consumables.

Simon was previously offering this service though a company he and his wife Jo started in 2010 called Ruralrpm.

"The idea was that a contractor or farmer called us and told us what they wanted and we did all the donkey work," says Simon.

"We found the best product for the best price, and in a lot of cases we could provide choice. A lot of rural suppliers are dictated to by franchise brands, supplier agreements and other factors that limit customers' choice and price range. We took all that away."

The service proved extremely popular, which presented the McAlisters with a problem.

"We were struggling to keep up and needed help — we didn't have the infrastructure setup to cope with the growth."

Rather than invest considerably in infrastructure they set about looking for a business with the resources already in place.

"The answer was staring down the barrel at us. HRL ticked all the boxes — existing infrastructure, existing supplies

business, an understanding of how to do business with very little stock, and they had skilled staff specialised in areas where we were weak.

"All this adds value to both HRL and RPM customers at no extra cost, allowing the customer a bigger range, a better choice and greater price options."

HRL General Manager Ed Marfell calls the recruiting of Simon "the perfect fit."

"Firstly Simon brings to HRL great strength in sourcing farm supplies categories that we have had limited expertise in, but which are brilliantly complementary to what Robert and Mark have been doing.

"Agricultural machinery and accessories is a tricky business but Simon knows it inside out.

"The other thing is that Simon's attitude and approach to customer service is the same as ours: Do it once, do it right and do it today if you can. This a very welcome development for HRL."

Simon has farm machinery in his blood, and by his own admission continues to have "iron disease". His family ran a farm machinery business in Southbridge. As soon as he left Lincoln he went out in pursuit of big iron on cropping farms in Canterbury and later Australia. When he came back, he worked for Norwoods and other machinery companies before he and Jo started Ruralrpm.

Insurance market opening up again

One of the major insurers has started accepting new business again in the earthquake-hit Malvern and West Melton districts. Sean Lysaght says the others are expected to follow suit.

This is most timely for HRL Insurance as Brad Mackenzie is now "flying solo" as an insurance representative and he will be concentrating all his efforts in these areas.

So clients in those districts who have been concerned about the up-to-datedness of their insurance covers are encouraged to give Brad a call (027 462 0119).

To enable Brad and Sean to spend more time out in the field, Debbie Hansen arrived at HRL Insurance from Southland earlier this month, strengthening the insurance back-office functions.

We welcome Debbie and look forward to being able to provide the even better service that her joining us will enable.

We've found a way to help Robbie get his mojo back! The anonymous photographer has asked for this month's \$250 donation to go to the City Mission.



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A NOTE FROM DH

Recent events in sheepmeat markets are making us realise just how volatile the world is. Maybe we've been cocooned from reality for the last 6–12 months.

The \$100 average for lamb that we talk about has been about right over the past three years, but the swings we have been experiencing are far more severe than a bland average conveys. It's the sharpness of the corrections that are impacting on the farm. And that impacts in turn on farmers' strategic thinking.

The harsh reality is that we in New Zealand are in an at-risk sector and we are not isolated from international economic volatility. This, as experience tells us, will continue to be a challenge, an uncontrollable fact of farming. What is also fact though is we are in the food chain business, and the human race needs food. And it needs it produced increasingly efficiently.

We are continually charging our preferred processors to come up with better marketing plans to boost our returns, and they are in all reality doing their damndest. We are unquestioned leaders in agri-sector ingenuity and farming practices but we have a floating currency which means we are a floating economy, so we will always be at the whim of world economic volatility. And further, our economic size and our geographic position on the globe will continue to present challenges for our financial returns.

Nobody could have accurately predicted everything that's impacted on our returns in recent years. And we certainly can't blame anybody for what we have seen in the sheep industry.

Yet we must keep at it, applying our Kiwi attitude to getting on with it in the face of those powerful shifts in market forces. Thank heaven for dairying, which is giving our whole pastoral sector an extra dimension of versatility and flexibility. It gives many of us choice.

The agri-sector in my opinion is in a good space — interest rates are low, we are gaining new technologies to make better use of water, new pasture technologies for improved production and new genetics in the animals we farm.

The human race needs food, but in the end the consumer has to be able to afford it, and I believe that means we have a responsibility to continually examine the costs of our farming practices.

Technology today gives us instant access to all kinds of data that influence our outcomes — market signals, weather patterns, exchange rates, business trends and much more. We have that information and we have to learn how to act upon it more effectively.

It's no fun at all for many of our farming people at present, but I strongly believe we will be better off for the experience, and we will be better prepared when something like this happens again. That's what makes this setback different from those of previous decades — we are in far better position to learn from it.

David Hazlett
Rural Bloke

FROM THE GM

In our autumn edition we ruminated, after talking to some meat industry insiders, on the prospect the UK and European sheep meat markets were going to fall flat after all the hype of last season. Well, our contacts were bang-on. It's interesting, and unfortunate, that farmers weren't getting those market signals directly from their marketers — unfortunate because there's only one place those marketers can now recoup their losses from.

This volatility, the violent swings and corrections, in sheepmeat markets just seems to be a fact of life in sheep farming. While record prices are great, they push up bottom lines with taxation implications for the following season when prices might not be so great, which is what we're seeing at present. Isn't there a saying about how you never own money, you just look after it until the real owner wants it back?

Nor is wool doing that well again at present and that doesn't help the cause, but it's not all doom and gloom: the wool industry is working hard on some new initiatives, Beef + Lamb is forecasting a 2% rise for beef and the meat companies, as we acknowledged in that article in the autumn, are continuing to do great things to open up new markets.

So there is hope and we just have to try and work our way through this sheepmeat volatility thing that's a very big problem right now but hopefully will not always be. I thought Beef + Lamb New Zealand Chairman Mike Petersen summed it up best in comments, in his recent "Chairman's Update" newsletter, on the 2nd Red Meat Sector Conference in July:

For me the conference reinforced what we have been saying for some time now. The volatility we are seeing today is the new normal, but this is in the context of increasing food prices and strong demand from a growing population in the medium to long term (his emphasis). No-one can accurately predict what is going to happen as the world faces up to the growing food security issues, but our current knowledge and analysis supports the assertion that we are on the cusp of an incredible opportunity as farmers here in New Zealand.

So we just have to grin and bear it, which makes the arrival of the festive season that much more welcome, even if it's also the busy season for most clients. I wish all the HRL blokes and blokesses a very happy Christmas and New Year, and thank them for the hard yards they've all put in this year, especially lately.

To all our clients, we say thanks for being such great partners to work with and we hope you get a chance to leave the boots off for at least a few days and spend some time with your loved ones.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to Simon McAlister and Debbie Hansen, both of them bringing more value to the HRL mix. And congratulations to Jacinda Stevens and Hayden on the recent arrival of Grace.

This time, also, we farewell and thank Paul Whittaker who has moved to a fulltime role with another company. We wish Paul, Michelle and family all the very best for the future.



Ed Marfell
General Manager



CLIENT PROFILE: Sam Douglas — Douglas Spraying Ltd.



The Douglas Spraying team photographed on The Gates with a fair bit of work ahead of them in the background! L-R Sam Douglas, Jarred Ormiston, Alex Collings, Sam Brown and Richard Harradine.

Seven years ago, 24-year-old Sam, originally from Greta Valley, was working for the Rotherham Farm Machinery Syndicate, and to keep busy was also doing some part-time work for one of the syndicate's shareholders, Phil Smith of Balmoral (featured in this winter's newsletter).

Beau McRae of Glens of Tekoa happened one day to ask Phil who was spraying his weeds. That led to a meeting on the Glens that was to be the launching pad for Douglas Spraying Ltd. Sam bought himself a handgun truck to tackle the run.

Now, he has three handgun trucks, six staff, a boom truck that sprayed 14,000 hectares last year, and a diary that's chocker for the next six months with hill work alone.

The trucks go as far as Arthur's Pass one way and Awatere Valley the other way. A fortnight after we spoke to him they were due to head up to The Muller. He also has work on Molesworth. Then there's a month a year on the Port Hills and out towards Akaroa for the Christchurch City Council.

The Ngai Tahu undertaking at Eyrewell is now on his books, too, since doing 1,000 hectares there last year.

Dairy has made some difference to the business but it's only one of several egg-baskets. "We're currently doing about 10,000 man-hours a year on scrub weeds.

The key to growth and success?

"The real secret is having good staff. Unfortunately they're not easy to find, but when you've got them, you have to look after them, because it's not easy work.

"We've got two Landcruisers with automatic reels and a Hilux with a mist-blower and motorised knapsacks. Sixty percent of our work is in the high country where you can't get trucks, and anyway the hoses are only 200m long and when you get up on that high country, 200 metres isn't very far, so we do a lot on foot.

"I've been fortunate most of my spraying career that I've had good blokes running my trucks. These ones go the extra mile

to get jobs done — I don't have to ask them, they just put their hands up."

Sam also had a very good working relationship with Rob Sharkie and Mark Clyne at PGG Wrightson " ... and I told that company they were the only two people keeping my business there."

Most of which moved across to HRL as soon as the two above-mentioned gentlemen made their move.

Sam appreciates the service they give him — and the referrals they freely hand out to other clients.

"They're a couple of genuine good bastards. They've got everything covered. As long as everything is organised in advance, nothing's an issue."

Even when the planning is not all in place, Sam says the service steps up to the plate: "The other night I discovered we were getting low on dye. Mark was out at home at 9 o'clock that night throwing it in the shed."

Sam and Amber live at Balcairn where Sam has his yard. "My lovely wife ..." is a daughter of Ashburton spray contractor Grant Withell, which Sam reckons is an excellent qualification for a spray contractor's wife "... she knew the business well and knew I'd be away from home a lot..."

Amber was assistant principal of Amuri School for a few years when they lived up that way, but now they're in Balcairn she stays at home looking after Georgia, nearly three, preparing for their next child due to arrive in early April, doing the books and "... reminding me of things I have to do."

Douglas Spraying is also an HRL Insurance client.

"It was too easy. Sean had just the right policy for us. He's a good bugger too. In fact they all are. They're not tomorrow people. They just get on and do it. And you pay that back. That's how business works, doesn't it?"

Canterbury Show history now available

The Canterbury A&P Association has published the 224-page **WHEN COUNTRY COMES TO TOWN** hard cover book to commemorate its 150th jubilee.

It traces the Association's history back beyond January 1863 to "... before the Canterbury pilgrims even set foot on Canterbury soil," said Association President Richard Lemon.

Christchurch journalist and author Rosa Shiels wrote the work.

When Country Comes to Town is available for \$70 from the Canterbury A&P Assn.

STAFF PROFILE ...

Mid-Canterbury livestock bloke

Marty Amos

Marty came to HRL after 20 years with PGG/Wrightson and Wrightson before that. He started in the business in his home patch of Mid-Canterbury — he comes off a farm in Wakanui. Four years later he and Rachel moved to Oxford, where they were married and lived for five years. Then it was up to Feilding for four years, followed by six years in Otago "... giving me a lot of contacts throughout the country".

That last posting was as livestock manager but he subsequently pulled back from management and returned to the road as a livestock agent.

"...I realised I enjoyed having a client base".

Marty gained a lot of good experience in dairying down south, and it is a region where he still has a loyal stable of active clients "...who are a very important part of our business. They give us great support."

Now he's back in a somewhat changed Mid-Canterbury and finding dairying taking up a lot of his time: "... the whole dairy business, whether it be herd sales, service bulls, cull cows, bobby calves, feed supplements and obviously grazing. There's a lot of business in a dairy farm — plenty of things we can help them with." But being a local doesn't necessarily



make it easier to break into the market: "There's lots of other companies here and we're just new. It's a matter of nibbling away and making the most of the opportunities we are presented with, and with the things that we get to do, doing them well."

The flexibility of working in a tight team makes things easier.

"It's less complicated. Although the other company was good to us, it's refreshing to have gotten away from that corporate culture and to be working with a good bunch of guys and girls who respect each other and work well together. And I get great support from all of them."

Rachel and Marty live on a three-hectare block with their three boys: Arch (9), Jed (7) and Travis (5). Marty plays "... a little bit of golf and social tennis..." but it's the things that he can do with the family

Rachel took this pic of Marty and the boys at Cathedral Cove on a recent holiday on the Coromandel.

that top the list of his favourite non-work activities: camping, boating, snow skiing, plenty of lawn sports, with rugby and cricket games the favourites, and generally spending time with them.

The Blokes' Diary ...

- Jan 10** Coalgate
- Jan 14** Strathview Station Lamb Sale
- Jan 16** Coalgate
- Jan 17** Rakaia Gorge Lamb Sale
- Jan 24** Coalgate
- Jan 31** Coalgate
- Feb 1** Hawarden Ewe Fair
- Feb 4** Castle Ridge Lamb Sale
- Feb 7** Coalgate
- Feb 11** Coalgate Perendale Ewe Sale
- Feb 14** Coalgate
- Feb 15** Sheffield Ewe Fair
- Feb 21** Coalgate
- Feb 28** Coalgate
- Mar 1** Beltana Farming Cattle Sale
- Mar 7** Coalgate
- Mar 14** Coalgate
- Mar 21** Coalgate
- Mar 27** Coalgate
- Mar 28** Culverden 1st Calf Sale

HRL

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