



Due diligence critical when buying cattle

The current incursion of *Mycoplasma bovis* has brought the issue of biosecurity to front and centre in the thinking of all farmers. "Could I be next?" is a very fair question for any farmer buying and selling cattle.

The extent of any farmer's vulnerability lies in the traceability of all cattle under that farmer's care, and the way in which stock are managed while in their care.

The key to mitigating risk is understanding stock history, via a correctly completed Animal Status Declaration (ASD), and ensuring that all cattle movements are recorded in NAIT. The ASD is required to travel with all cattle moving from one owner – or carer – to another, and in the case of electronic transmission it must arrive before the cattle.

A correctly completed ASD (or a chain of ASDs in the case of cattle that have changed hands more than once) reveals the origin of the animals and their subsequent history. Farmers must remember that an ASD needs to be kept for a minimum of six months or the entire time that a purchased, leased or grazed animal is in their possession. Thus, previous history about non-vendor-bred stock is accessible.

The unfortunate reality is that many animals in circulation are non-compliant in terms of ASDs and/or NAIT movement recording. The difficulty that can present is that if any property is issued with a Restricted Place Notice or a Notice of Direction by MPI, all cattle known to have left that property come under suspicion.

We talk regularly to an agricultural consultant specialising in on-farm biosecurity and NAIT, Merryn Pugh, and she is emphatic that all farmers need "... to know how to set up on-farm biosecurity, and how to write biosecurity plans."

Full compliance makes plain business sense, she says: "It will be cheaper to become compliant than remain non-compliant."

On the question of buying in animals: "Farmers must understand the risk they put their business in if they've got trading stock. If they're running that stock on the same NAIT number as their stud/breeding herds, say, it looks to MPI as if all these animals are running together. When a biosecurity incursion happens, there is a very real chance that everything will be shut down."

So how can farmers mitigate the risk?

"Demand accountability from people they are buying from, in the same way as they need to be accountable to the people they are



Merryn Pugh, rural consultant specialising in biosecurity and NAIT. Merryn can be contacted on 021 08168566.

selling to. Accepting non-compliant stock is accepting possible liability and further problems.

"In this current climate, particularly with Mbovis, it's very important to do your due diligence. Use the tools available and understand them – demand accountability

and understand them – demand accountability for animals you receive and be accountable for animals that you send away.

That involves being NAIT-compliant, making sure the animals' TB status is up to date, and that the ASD is correct."

"How many buyers at the saleyards ask to see the ASD of stock they're buying? Or how to use an ASD as a tool to mitigate risk? Not many. There are questions on the ASD that can alert an astute person to possible risks – whether the cattle are owner-bred (2.1); and if animals from a lower TB status been introduced (6.8). If stock history is unclear, beware, or ask more questions.

"The first thing I'd be doing is ringing the seller to ensure traceability, and satisfy my individual biosecurity requirements."

Buyers at Coalgate are welcome to ask at the saleyards office to see ASDs of any cattle on offer on the day. HRL also has its own security measure in place for all animals it is involved in transferring: a Biosecurity & Traceability Agreement, signed by both vendors and buyers, confirms that the animals are NAIT and ASD compliant, and that they have been checked for fitness to travel.

Livestock GM Ed Marfell says it requires a commitment on the part of everyone to step up to the plate: "Everyone must play their part in making this investment of ours – farming – as safe as we can. It's our clients' lifeline and it's our lifeline. 'She'll be right' doesn't cut it anymore. We still have clients who fail to complete ASDs correctly, or fail to use an up-to-date one. They need to remember it is a legal document they are signing."

Ed says only complete traceability will satisfy the niche high-priced market that New Zealand meat will need to reach when synthetic meats take hold.

Rural Supplies business gathers momentum

Spring is here and spray-outs are underway all over the place. A lot of planning is going on for spring cropping, mostly brassicas and other fodder crops. Vegetable crops are growing in importance for us too – sweet corn in the North Island in particular.

We're also seeing greater anticipation of dry conditions around February in the more drought-prone districts, so an increasing number of feed crops for next winter are being planned for sowing this spring.

So we're dealing with summer crops and winter crops at the same time.

Docking is well underway in the North Island, which sees a lift in the animal health category with inoculations and so forth, but at this time of year the business is driven by seed and chemical, with the blokes assisting clients with ensuring inputs arrive on time and then, post-establishment, walking crops to keep on top of any pest and disease challenges. Dairy business too, of course, lifts significantly at this time of year.

The new team we have assembled in the North Island is gelling extremely well, and they're signing on a good number of new clients – but that can also be said of the South Island too, so we're very excited about what lies ahead for both HRL and its growing band of farming people.

Tom Hamilton
Rural Supplies GM



Nobody using the internet is safe from cyber crime

I was lucky enough to attend a Cyber Risk Management seminar recently in Auckland, and what an eye-opener it was. Cyber attacks are rising exponentially each year and are reportedly estimated to top \$6 trillion by 2021 (compare this to insurance property losses in 2017 of \$338 billion).

In Australia it is reported that in one month alone Australians lost \$110,000 every hour to cyber criminals, or more than \$2.6m every day. This is a serious threat and the business landscape (including rural) is changing rapidly with businesses of all sizes now online, providing access to company information that is stored (or transmitted) via email programs. A lot of cyber criminal activity targets data theft, disclosure of personal or financial data, modifying and corrupting data, and blocking.

Although external threats are commonplace, be careful of the internal threat that can exist within your organisation. You may have heard of ransomware, email phishing, whaling and pharming; they are all rhetoric around cyber-crime and social engineering.

This is a real threat to business and that includes agriculture so it is essential that cover is in place to mitigate the threats we all face. Cover reduces risk from these threats, and could be the factor that prevents destruction of a business. Talk to one of the Hazlett insurance team about Cyber Liability cover and how it can be of benefit to you.

Nick Percy Insurance GM



Lamb contracts available

The sheep and beef markets have been very strong but we are certainly getting the signal that they have peaked and are coming back. There are minimum lamb contracts out there at \$6.60/kg, until Christmas time that is, so that's an indicator that the lamb schedule still has some gas in it – but you have to make the commitment to deliver on that contract.

Beef is still good but it's under pressure; the dollar is helping, but we're also seeing signs that the heat is coming out of that market as well. We have those severe droughts in Australia and America so they are offloading a lot of cattle but eventually, though, opportunities will arise from that. When they finally get rain they will be restocking and the demand side will dominate again.

We're seeing great prices still with merino wool – it's only the crossbred that's off and that's so disappointing because it's such a wonderful natural product and it seems unbelievable that we can't get that one right.

Back here inside the gate things are looking better too. We've had a comparatively mild weather with lots of rain - too much for some, probably - but it's set just about everyone up for a great spring so let's hope over the next few months, we can all be making decisions we want and need to make without being dictated to by feed pinches.

Ed Marfell Livestock GM



Staff Profile...

Lisa Stephens Finance & Procurement

Lisa's family farmed in Marlborough and then Waiau. Upon leaving school in 2002 she undertook a business diploma course, after which she joined a Canterbury-based rural servicing company as office junior. She worked there for seven years.

Then came marriage to Matt the Builder and, duly, maternity leave to look after new arrivals Baxter and Jed, now aged six and nearly-three respectively.

That spell at home ended abruptly in 2016 with an unexpected call from David Hazlett which saw Lisa joining the expanding HRL Finance & Procurement team. She has slotted in brilliantly and is clearly very happy to be there:

"I love the whole whanau ... the team ... the family. Everybody knuckles down and does what needs to be done but we all get on really well and have a whole lot of fun."

The family is sports mad, with Matt and Lisa having played plenty of it earlier on and now Baxter champing at the bit when he's not tearing around on his bike.



Angus Hazlett between Guido, left, and Edmund, right, at the National Hockey Stadium in Wellington where the Cousins brothers have just played for the Central Mavericks against Bay of Plenty in the Senior Men's National Championship.

The farm they love to leave

A fascinating approach to family farming can be found at Colyton in the Manawatu.

It appears in this newsletter because Angus Hazlett and Edmund Cousins faced off for their respective provinces in schoolboy hockey years ago, forming a strong friendship that is now an equally strong business relationship.

John, the third generation of his family to farm the property, and Toos Cousins have three sons, Edmund, 26, and 24-year-old twins Guido and Julius. The unique culture that binds this family together is that of learning through travel.

They all work on the farm, but the five of them are hardly ever all at home at once, and on at least two occasions they have all gone away together. In 2001 they left the farm in the care of a manager for a year and flew to Holland, Toos's homeland, where they picked up a campervan, went up to Iceland for a couple of months and then drifted southward through the UK down to Morocco.

When the boys were still at high school the family journeyed to India for six weeks, highlighting how fortunate they are to be living in New Zealand. They travelled only by public means: "A great family outing that was certainly not a holiday and we came home for a rest," recalls Edmund.

The boys all went through Lincoln's B.Com Ag course (Massey is too close to home, and Canterbury is a strong hockey centre) at which point half the farm was

leased out to cut down the workload for Dad; it has remained that way to ease the pressure on whoever is left at home.

"Mum and Dad have always encouraged us to travel. We are in a very fortunate and privileged position."

Currently, John and Toos are away for three months in North America and Mexico, and Julius has been working on a sheep farm in Scotland, so Guido and Edmund have the reins. When Mum and Dad get back, Guido is off to North and South America. Edmund has already been away this year. And so it goes. Because the absences are lengthy, whoever remains at home has full control of all farm decisions.

When we say 'travelling' here we are mainly referring to visiting farmers all around the world: the Cousins are keen to see how it is done in other parts, always looking for ideas they can bring back home. So they have stayed on farms in, variously, Europe, North and South America, the Falkland Islands, Iceland and so on. "We don't do the touristy things. We really enjoy staying with the locals, and helping out a bit," says Edmund.

The Cousins employ no other staff and are regarded locally as hard workers, but Edmund maintains "... farming is not work to us. It's very much a lifestyle."

The Cousins boys do not yet have permanently assigned roles on the farm – whoever is home does what has to be done. Edmund says the time will come when that happens. Just not yet.

The property is being developed with an eye to it sustainably supporting the three brothers and their future families down the track. A good deal of tree-planting – riparian, timber and aesthetic – is a big part of that work.

The farm programme is based on dairy heifers grazing a largely grass-based system. The lower labour requirement of heifers, when compared with other options like bulls, suits the family well. The contracts are typically on a weight-gain basis, and they have found short-rotation grasses are better than crops for putting weight on heifers through the winter.

They do some kale for carryover cows in the winter, and some rape and chicory have entered the mix for summer feeding of the heifers in conjunction with balage, but grass remains the mainstay.

Increasingly, especially since the Canterbury hockey player arrived on the Manawatu scene, trading and finishing of lambs has become an option as well; that is where the chicory went this past season because it offered a better return.

Of Angus ("Gus") Hazlett, Edmund says "He's a chip off the old man's block alright; he's always on the phone waving prices under our noses. He doesn't give up. To his credit, he's the one who's made us think about lambs more. He's also had us grazing things that we hadn't done in the past like carryover cows, works ewes and other bits and pieces."

A NOTE FROM DH

Our industry continues to change. While it would be tempting to push back against the changes currently being thrust upon us, I'm not sure that's the Kiwi way. The Kiwi farming way is to embrace change. Currently we are facing changes in the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act. And we should embrace those, too. After all, we are farming people who derive our livelihoods from nurturing our animals – just as we nurture our soils and other aspects of our environment. It's pretty simple: no health, no wealth. There's no better people than us when it comes to caring for animals.

Again I take this opportunity to encourage everyone involved in the rural sector in whatever form to draw urban friends and family closer to our lives and our work so they can gain a greater understanding of what it's like to be a farmer. We need them to have a greater appreciation of the lengths we go to in ensuring the health and welfare of our livestock and the steps we are taking to position their landscapes and our landscapes to be available for tomorrow's generation. We need to keep sharing our story!

David Hazlett Rural Bloke



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Hazlett Rural Limited

Upcoming Sales

COALGATE Weekly Sale each **Thursday**

TEMUKA Prime Cattle & Sheep Sales each **Monday**

TEMUKA Store Cattle Sales each **Thursday**
– except when Calf Sales fall in April

For all sale dates, please visit –
www.hazlett.nz/whats-on

Special Sales

5th Oct Cheviot Spring Cattle Sale

10th Oct Cheviot Spring Cattle Sale

19th Oct Culverden Spring Cattle Sale

On Farm Sales

3rd Oct Mt Nessoning Cattle Sale

19th Nov Highfield Lamb Sale

20th Nov Glenmark Lamb Sale

21st Nov Banks Peninsula Lamb Sale

22nd Nov Avonlea Lamb Sale

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