

Victorian Farmer

AUTUMN 2022

HAPPY PLACE

Meet young farmer Lachie Morrison

ASPARAGOPSIS

*A surprising seaweed solution
to methane emissions*

VIC ON YOUR TABLE

*Metropolitan delights uncovered
from the heart of Victoria*

CATRIONA ROWNTREE

*From Wonder World
to Wool*



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Lights, climate, action.

In the lead-up to National Agriculture Day in 2021, VFF interviewed 11 farmers from different parts of the industry. They answered all sorts of questions, from why they became farmers, to what they'd do if they weren't (even if the answer was a straight up 'I was always going to be a farmer').

The series started while COP26 (the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) was underway, which made one of the questions particularly topical:

"What's your farm doing to combat climate change?"

Farmers aren't the only ones asking the question, but the agricultural industry is definitely feeling the effects of climate change more immediately than others – so much so that some farmers have even changed their definition of what a drought is. The term itself is relative; conditions that might have been considered a drought 20 years ago wouldn't warrant the label today.

And while farming bodies are advocating for more investment into research to help farmers cut emissions on their farms, VFF's interviews made it clear that no farmer is waiting around for the perfect moment.

Whether it's installing solar systems to use more renewable energy, planting trees and crops to sequester carbon or moving to more climate-friendly suppliers, farmers across Victoria are already making changes to lower their impact.

Like many Australians, they know that any reduction – big or small – is a step in the right direction.



Supporting renewable energy beyond the farm.

For farmers who rely on the grid for some (or all) of their energy, picking the right power company is important.

While keeping costs down is a big factor, people are also moving away from companies that continue to burn fossil fuels. Instead, they want to know they're supporting businesses that are helping Australia move to renewable energy, which is why VFF partnered with Momentum.

As well as offering up to 100% GreenPower on their plans, Momentum is wholly owned by Hydro Tasmania – Australia's largest generator of renewable energy. They make enough electricity to power Tasmania, with enough left over to send to us on the mainland. As their retail arm, Momentum – and their customers – help Hydro Tasmania with their goal of empowering more communities with clean energy. All this is part of the reason Momentum earned a 4.5-star rating in Greenpeace's 2022 Green Electricity Guide, placing them in the top 3 greenest power companies in Australia.

Above:

Hydro Tasmania is Australia's largest generator of renewable energy with 54 major dams including this one on the Derwent River.



VFF members can find out more at momentum.com.au/vff or by calling 1800 628 644



Hi everyone,

A big thank you once again for taking the time to read our latest edition of the Victorian Farmer and for those of you who are first time readers, welcome! Can you believe we're more than a third of the way through this year? Time is well and truly flying by.

I would like to announce that this edition is the first of many more to come that is now produced in-house here at the VFF. No one knows Victorian farmers better than locals themselves and this move will no doubt ensure this continues and we highlight the stories and news you want to read. We'll still continue to produce the content you've come to know from us, however it's now coming to you from within our four walls, and this publication is now printed in Ballarat. It's a testament to the new department that was created in our organisational restructure last year, the Promotions and Communications team.

In this edition, we explore the opportunities on offer in the race to commercialise a feed additive to reduce methane emission in cattle and sheep, revisit our 'RAT Race' from earlier in the year, discover local produce in demand in Melbourne's top restaurants and chat to some Victorian farmers.

As I'm writing this, there's genuine uncertainty and almost a sense of helplessness as we lay witness to the overseas conflict, have watched in horror at whole herds of cows being swept away in floods in QLD and NSW, not to mention the lingering impacts of the pandemic. In many aspects, it's out of our control



what happens in the future and what, if any inadvertent consequences it may have on agriculture. It's absolutely time for real contingencies to be put into place to safeguard our industry and food security in Australia.

I don't have a crystal ball but do know our ability to continue to get the job done and keep farming, despite the challenges thrown our way is second to none. However, we need the investment, resources and support to keep it this way.

We have been repeating our calls for the decision makers to ensure farmers and regional Victorians are a priority in both of this year's elections.

Our strength lies in our numbers, and as Victoria's largest industry group representing farmers, together we can make a real difference. Your feedback, opinions and concerns are what makes the VFF unique and fuels the very core of our Organisation and our 43-year history.

As we continue to navigate through our crazy world, take care of yourself and your family, and as always, happy farming (and happy reading!).

Emma Germano
VFF President

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HORT THOUGHTS PODCAST LAUNCHES

Are you looking to keep up with all of the latest news and happenings in the horticulture industry?

In the VFF's HortThoughts podcast series, listeners join host Tegan Buckley as she chats to a wide range of guests specialising in policy, safety, mental health, supply chain disruptions and much more.

Topics and guests include:

- **Episode #1:** VFF Horticulture President, Nathan Free and VFF General Manager for Policy, Luke Hooke
- **Episode #2:** Andrew Whitelaw, Manager, Commodity Market Insights talking about Supply Chain Disruptions
- **Episode #3:** Farm Safety with the VFF Senior Farm Safety Advisor, John Darcy
- **Episode #4:** Mental health with RUOK? Ambassador, Seryn Adams
- **Episode #5:** Horticulture Visa options with AUSVEG National Manager – Public Affairs, Tyson Cattle
- **Episode #6:** Employer Obligations with the VFF's Allan Zoch

Start listening now on the VFF website at:

www.vff.org.au/category/vff-news



PEOPLE POWER

In early March CEO Jane Lovell and Horticulture Vice-President Katherine Myers joined more than 100 farmers and advocates to rally on the steps of State Parliament.

It was a clear show of support in calling for the Victorian Government to scrap the current plans for AusNet's 190km power line project through western Victoria.

The community led, grass roots initiative is the latest move to influence the development slated for construction in one of Victoria's most productive and fertile agricultural regions.



Victorian Farmer

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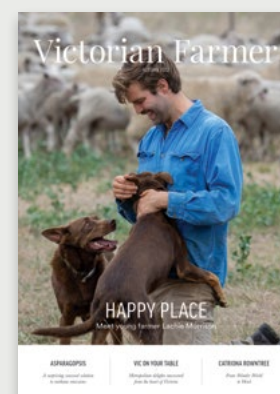
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Victorian Farmer magazine is published by the Victorian Farmers Federation (ABN: 67 079 980 304)

Farrer House
Level 3, 24 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3003
©2022. All rights reserved.
Printed by Sovereign Press
in Ballarat, Victoria.
Cover image by Jay Town.

1300 882 833



AUSSIE AG WORTH MORE THAN EVER BEFORE

The Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (ABARES) expects the value of agriculture to reach \$81 billion this financial year, that's up more than \$12 billion on the previous record, set last year.

This means the value of the Australian agriculture industry has never been worth more, with Victoria contributing roughly one quarter of this figure.

It's off the back of a record grain harvest and the highest prices paid for Australian produce in 32 years and comes as the Australian agricultural output value surges towards being worth \$100 billion.



What's on

Please visit the VFF events page for further information: www.vff.org.au/events

April



VFF UDV Conference
Zinc, Federation Square, Melbourne

June



VFF Grains and Livestock Conference
Mercure Hotel and Convention Centre Ballarat

October



VFF Symposium and Dinner
Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

NEW PARTNERS BOOST VFF MEMBER BENEFITS

VFF Members are set to enjoy more tangible benefits than ever before with a number of new exclusive deals and offers available to VFF Members.

VFF General Manager Promotions and Communications Anita Donnelly said "our partners understand the needs of farmers. They offer great deals for Members and also support regional communities. We're excited to have secured a range of partners and continue to approach more based on what you, our Members tell us you need and want. Since the last edition when we announced our Bunnings partnership; Isuzu Trucks and Power Solutions, Accor and Mitsubishi have come on board."

Read more on our website at: www.vff.org.au/offer

VFF LEADS CHARGE FOR PORT EFFICIENCY FIX

The VFF is leading calls for urgent government action to strengthen port regulation and improve Australia's port efficiency with the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Australia's Maritime Logistics Systems underway.

VFF Infrastructure and Transport Chair Ryan Milgate said the significant pressures facing the agriculture supply chain are being compounded by high port and stevedore costs, insufficient regulation and low productivity.

"We need both the Victorian and Federal Governments to work together to stop Australia becoming a destination of last resort," Mr Milgate said.

Read more on our website at: www.vff.org.au/media-release

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Top tips from Telstra to help you stay safe from scammers



Telstra now blocks about 1.5 million suspected scam calls in Australia every week, and about 6.5 million every month. It's part of our Cleaner Pipes initiative, where we're working to reduce the harm of scams, phishing, ransomware and other malware across our networks.

We're doing a lot behind the scenes to block illegitimate activity, but there's a lot that you can do too. If you think you're receiving a scam call, the simplest advice is to hang up. But how do you know for

sure it's actually a scam? Thankfully, combined with some healthy scepticism, there are usually clear signs that will help you spot a scam.

Telstra is taking action to block scam SMS messages

We've developed a tool we are piloting within the company that is designed to automatically detect and block scam SMS messages as they travel across our network, stopping them before they reach your mobile phone. The trial helps 'train' the systems to spot the difference between a legitimate and a malicious SMS. Once the system reaches the point where it can accurately and effectively block the majority of scam

Here are Telstra's top five tips:

- 1 Don't be convinced if it looks like an incoming call from a legitimate business or government organisation.
- 2 Is the caller pressuring you and making it seem like the matter is urgent?
- 3 Take note of the time of day – is it a reasonable time for a trusted organisation to be calling you?

- 4 Is an unknown number or trusted brand trying to call you repeatedly?
- 5 The golden rule: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

If you think you might have been scammed, contact us, especially if the scam involved impersonating Telstra, and we can help secure your account.

www.telstra.com.au/contact-us

www.telstra.com.au/contact-us/feedback-complaints/report-something



MESSAGES

1m ago

zhang7948927@163.com
Hi there, do you need part-time job? Monthly salary *6000 - 30000*
AUD *500* per day at least.
No service charge.

SMS we plan to enable it across our mobile network, probably early next year.

SIM swaps and porting fraud, how Telstra are working to stop it.

SIM swaps and porting fraud are on the rise and, if left unchecked, can lead to identity theft and serious financial crime.

We're on a mission for better security, and we've started working with organisations in the banking industry and other sectors to make it harder for criminals to steal your identity and, ultimately, your hard-earned cash. Our latest initiative will help protect you at that last line of defence where a scammer is about to take off your money and involves us working with other organisations such as the banking sector.

When you apply to transfer money from your account, there are several checks and balances to ensure that you are who you say you are, especially when transferring to a new recipient.

A recent SIM swap or port out on a user's mobile number might indicate that the person who has access to that mobile service and is receiving one-time codes, might not actually be who they say they are. This is where we come into it.

To help keep you safe, when a request is made to us by a banking organisation we'll provide a rating (in the form of a number on a risk scale) which gives an indication of whether there has been any recent SIM swaps or port out activity for the mobile service you're using as a form of identity with that organisation.

Although our initial focus is to work with the banking sector, we're also considering how this fraud-detection technology could be applied in retail, insurance, transport and logistics, social networking and even online gaming.

How to keep yourself safe - One way we've found to help stop them is to implement multi-factor authentication (MFA). In simple terms, MFA combines multiple layers of verification to help institutions protect and prevent a criminal from accessing your account, even if they manage to steal or guess your password. To get more information on MFA go to <https://exchange.telstra.com.au/make-hackers-give-up-with-multi-factor-authentication/>

Asparagopsis – A seaweed solution to methane emissions?

Farms across Australia are racing to commercialise a **feed additive** grown on land or in the sea to reduce methane emissions in cattle and sheep.

WORDS

Daniel Forwood and Luke Hooke

FUN FACT

The supplement, lathered in sunflower oil, molasses or similar to assist its palatability, is not an attempt to convert the herd or flock to a **sushi diet**, nor is nutrition the primary driver.

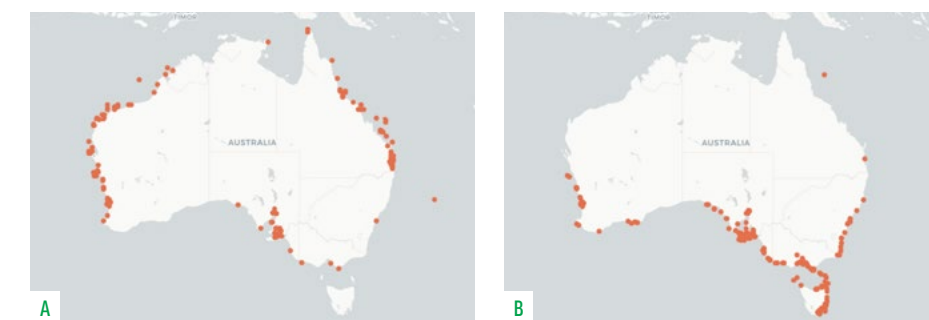
Commercialisation is happening at Agriculture Victoria's Ellinbank Smart Farm, nestled in the fertile rolling hills of West Gippsland, 10km south of Warragul, where a select group of dairy cows have been fed a seaweed supplement. In Tasmania, wool producer Simon Cameron has been involved in a trial feeding the supplement to merino sheep in-paddock.

The supplement, lathered in sunflower oil, molasses or similar to assist its palatability, is not an attempt to convert the herd or flock to a sushi diet, nor is nutrition the primary driver. This seaweed supplement is *Asparagopsis*. The genus of red seaweed that some in the red meat sector have been hailing as a potential solution to the industry's methane problem.

In this feature we take a deep dive into the methane mitigating potential of this macroalgae that is native to the warm and temperate waters off the Australian coastline to try to determine whether it can overcome its biggest challenge – whether it is a viable option to reduce methane on pasture-based sheep, cattle and dairy farms in Australia.

What is *Asparagopsis* and how does it work?

The genus *Asparagopsis* comprises two species – A. *Asparagopsis taxiformis* and B. *Asparagopsis armata*.



Distribution of (A) *A. taxiformis* and (B) *A. armata* in Australian waters. Images obtained from the Atlas of Living Australia: <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/NZOR-6-73414#overview>; <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/NZOR-6-120100>

The secret to its methane reducing potential lies in the digestive tract of ruminants. The first of four compartments in the ruminant stomach, the rumen acts as a large fermentation vat, initiating the breakdown of fibre. This process is aided by a dynamic ecosystem of archaea, bacteria, fungi, and protozoa. Methanogens are a group of archaea which actively scavenge free hydrogen and carbon dioxide in the rumen to produce methane (CH₄) as a product of methanogenesis. This methane is then eructated (burped) out by ruminants, contributing to the industry's methane problem.

Recently, bioactive compounds have been investigated as the 'silver bullet' to stamping out ruminant methane emissions. Bromoform (CHBr₃) is a naturally occurring, bioactive compound stored in the gland cells of *Asparagopsis*, and acts as a line of defence against bacterial fouling in nature¹. Bromoform also has the capacity to interrupt the final stages of methanogenesis by inhibiting enzymes integral to metabolism in methanogens².

Researchers worldwide have tapped into this abundant resource to assess the suitability, and dosage response of *Asparagopsis* in ruminant production systems. Two University of California studies were conducted^{3,4}, aiming to determine the methane-reduction capacity of both species of *Asparagopsis* in Holstein cows and in Angus-Hereford cross steers fed at 1% (*A. armata*; mixed with 400 mL molasses and water and added to a mixed ration) and 0.5% (*A.*

taxiformis; mixed with 200 mL molasses and 200 mL water and added to a mixed ration) on an organic matter (OM)-basis⁵. This reduced methane production (grams/day) by up to 67.2% and 58.7% for each *Asparagopsis* species, respectively. Similarly, a CSIRO trial⁶ reduced methane production in sheep by up to 80% with 3% OM inclusion in a pelleted ration. Although, research is ongoing to mitigate methane and maintain feed intake, which has been noted to reduce with increasing dosage of *Asparagopsis* in several studies.

Recognising this experimental success, the Commonwealth Government, through Phase 1 of the Methane Emissions Reduction in Livestock scheme granted \$2.5 million in funding to commercial projects testing *Asparagopsis* in feedlot, grazing and sheep trials. One of these projects, based at Ellinbank Smart Farm, will be studying the application of *Asparagopsis* as a commercial feed supplement.

Similarly, the Commonwealth has also granted funding for other additives which have methane mitigating properties. Such additives include 3-nitrooxypropanol (3-NOP) and *Desmanthus*, a legume native to Mexico, North, Central and South America which does not cause bloat in ruminants.

Eleven experiments (nine studies) were conducted into 3-NOP, an ingredient in several unreleased commercial additives that inactivates the enzyme involved in the last steps of methanogenesis (methyl-coenzyme M reductase)⁷. A study by Wageningen University (Netherlands) also determined that methane production

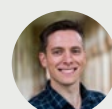




could be reduced by up to 22% in beef cattle, and 39% in dairy cattle⁸ with 3-NOP. Similarly, J. Black, T.M. Davison and I. Box (2021) reviewed current methane mitigation strategies, finding that 3-NOP and *Desmanthus* both reduced methane, but not as effectively as *Asparagopsis* (90% vs. 40% and 15% within animals, respectively). Use of *Desmanthus*, a hardy legume found in central-western, north and north-western Queensland has been investigated in production systems with low quality fodder, where inclusion of up to 31% reducing methane emissions by up to 10% had no effect on feed intake⁹. Despite boasting high digestibility, palatability and protein content *Desmanthus* does not cause bloat, unlike temperate legumes given its condensed tannin content.¹⁰

The Australian trials supported in Phase 1 of the Methane Emissions Reduction in Livestock program involved partnerships between government, universities and businesses in the red meat sector such as Midfield Meat, GrainCorp, Woolworths, Australian Agricultural Company and Stockyard feedlot.

No doubt about it - there is a race to commercialise these methane emissions reducing technologies. Fuelling the race in public and private investment, increasing demands from government and consumers for agriculture to reduce emissions and increasingly, eagerness from producers to lower their carbon footprint. 🌱



INTRODUCING

Daniel Forwood
VFF Farming Systems Advisor

Daniel Forwood joined the VFF in February as our new Farming Systems Advisor. Dan joins the VFF from The University of Queensland where he completed his Ph. D. in ruminant nutrition and applied microbiology.

Dan's research topic for his Ph.D. was the use of unsaleable vegetables as sustainable ruminant feed additives.

At the VFF Dan manages the Farming Systems Committee with policy responsibilities including animal welfare, biosecurity, ag and vet chem regulation and plastic and organics recycling. Current priorities for Dan and the Committee include the development of Victoria's new animal welfare act and the development of a national biosecurity strategy.

FOOTNOTES

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⁹Suybeng, B., Charmley, E., Gardiner, C.P., Malau-Aduli, B.S. and Malau-Aduli, A.E., 2020. Supplementing northern Australian beef cattle with *Desmanthus* tropical legume reduces in-vivo methane emissions. *Animals*, 10(11), p.2097.

¹⁰McMahon, L.R., McAllister, T.A., Berg, B.P., Majak, W., Acharya, S.N., Popp, J.D., Coulman, B.E., Wang, Y. and Cheng, K.J., 2000. A review of the effects of forage condensed tannins on ruminal fermentation and bloat in grazing cattle. *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*, 80(3), pp.469-485.



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VICTORIA

Thursday, 26 May 2022
SHEPPARTON



Happy Place

Every farmer has a happy place. It might be on a tractor, or in the shearing shed. For some, it's sitting on the back veranda watching the sun set over the paddocks.



WORDS

Wendy Hargreaves

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jay Town

For **Lachie Morrison**, 29, that happy place is shifting a mob of sheep with his bullet-fast kelpies Sam and Missy, and his not-so-quick chocolate labrador Bella.

“When it’s all working like clockwork, moving sheep can be really peaceful,” says Lachie, the fifth generation of Morrisons at Woolbrook, a mixed crop and grazing property spanning 1803ha at Teesdale, 100km south west of Melbourne.



“It’s beautiful here with a lot of native scrubland and creeks and valleys. You get these moments when the dogs are doing their thing and you do a little exhale and take it all in.”

“There’s a real serenity in those moments. You think to yourself, this is it. This is pretty good.”

And yet, just a few years ago, farm life was the last thing Lachie wanted.

Growing up with “drought after drought after drought”, Lachie says he couldn’t leave Woolbrook fast enough. He graduated from Melbourne University with an agriculture degree, moving up the ranks as an agribusiness banker with NAB.

“There was never any pressure to take over the farm,” Lachie says. “I was free to make up my own mind. And back then, agriculture was down in the dumps, so the farm never felt like an option.”

“I saw the whole succession planning process as a huge stress. Then you’re expected to sign yourself up for life with a mountain of debt in front of you.”

“For all these reasons, farming just wasn’t a consideration for me.”

Lachie knew his father Andrew wanted to move on from Woolbrook, so he got on with his own career.

“*You get these moments when the dogs are doing their thing and you do a little exhale and take it all in.*”

He started a new life as a bank manager in Hobart, where he met his partner, Anise Boulot.

And that’s when fate intervened.

Andrew sold the farm to a local property investor for a confidential sum in late 2018, with part of the property earmarked for development in a low-density residential zone next to the Teesdale township.

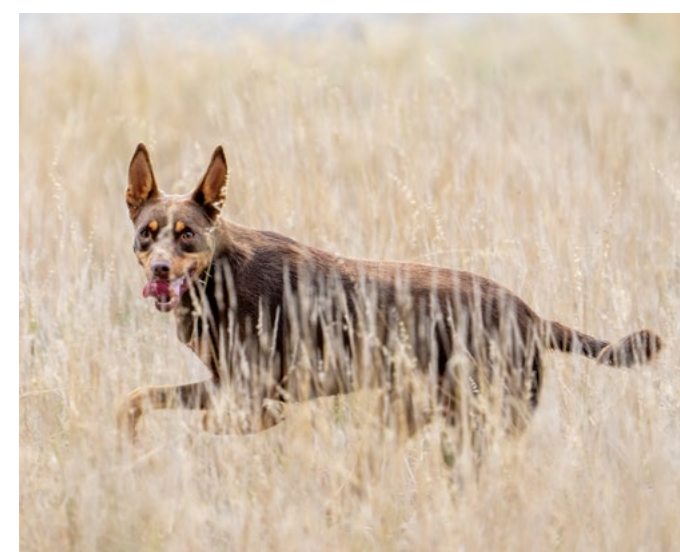
With no immediate plans to subdivide, and no wish to farm the property, the new owner offered Lachie a 10-year lease. Lachie jumped at the chance and was soon joined by Anise to run the farm together.

“I’d never thought about leasing the place, but it was a game-changer for me,”



PICTURED

(Left then clockwise) Lachie keeping a close eye over the flock, it’s a dusty job; Lachie and his best mate in action, eyes on the prize.



Lachie says. “There’s a big degree of freedom, without the pressure of ownership and debt.”

“I can still farm the place as if I own it, and make sure everything’s done right.”

“Hopefully, I’ll be able to lease the place for longer than 10 years. I’d love to spend the rest of my life on the farm.”

“But if it doesn’t work out, the lease makes it much easier to leave.”

Lachie and Anise have wasted no time putting their own stamp on Woolbrook.

Since taking on the farm lease in 2019, the couple renovated the five-bedroom homestead and gardens to develop a side business hosting weddings and farm stay holidays.

“It took us a couple of years to get the house and garden to a standard where we could do weddings, but we’re there now, and it’s booming,” Lachie says.

“It’s been the big positive out of COVID. People are realising there are so many amazing places to visit in regional Australia.”

Weekends at Woolbrook are booked out for much of 2022 and into 2023, presenting an interesting problem for the young couple. When visitors rent the house, Lachie and Anise lock their personal possessions away in cupboards and bunk in a converted shipping container, out of sight from guests.

“We’ll need to find a more permanent solution, but it’s fine for now,” Lachie says.



"We love hosting people, and people seem to like coming here."

With several different crops rotated across the farm, and 2000 sheep to feed and shear, it's rarely quiet at Woolbrook.

But Lachie thrives on pressure.

"Those busy times, when you're flat out... they're the times when I really love farming," he says.

"It's great at harvest time and shearing time. We're going flat out, but everything's working perfectly. It's like farming is a fine line, and the best times are when you're right on that edge."

"Farming is unlike any other business because it's something that can never be 100 per cent solved."

"That's what makes it interesting. Solving new problems every day."

When Victorian Farmer visited Woolbrook for a tour of the farm, the homestead at the heart of the property was buzzing with activity.

Every corner of the farm holds a lesson in Victoria's farming history dating back to 1837 when the Learmonth brothers took the first pastoral lease.

The original wing of Woolbrook homestead was built in 1857 by John Bell, the first editor of the Geelong Advertiser. The austere bluestone wing remains today, with several extensions added over the decades, including a rebuild after a new section of the building burned to the ground.

In 1909, sisters Annie and Christina Robertson purchased the property and moved from NSW to run the farm. Soon after, Christina married Robert Morrison and the couple took over the property.

More than a century later, Lachie is full of respect for his ancestors. He also knows he has big boots to fill.

His father may have moved to Torquay to enjoy retirement, but he remains an important sounding board.

"Dad would have to be the busiest retired person ever," Lachie laughs. "I'm lucky to catch him."

"But it's great to have him up the road. He helps in the busy times, and with big decisions."

"One of the most amazing things about farming is seeing how past generations have left their mark on the property."

"You can track how things change over the long-term."

"I get to see the native plantations that my grandparents did. The native vegetation is thriving, and a home to heaps of wildlife."



"I also see the amazing work by my dad on cropping and drainage. He was a real forward-thinker in the industry, converting merino country to cropping."

"And back at the homestead, 150 years ago someone planted beautiful trees around the house. They're still here."

"I'm standing on the shoulders of giants."

So how does Lachie want to leave his mark at Woolbrook?

Lachie takes a deep breath.

"That's a big question," he replies. "Farming as an industry is changing fast. My focus is making sure I have a social license to farm. It's time for all of us to get on that train."

"It's not enough to say we have a connection to the land. Ownership of the land is not enough either. People have expectations that you're doing the right thing, whether it's animal welfare or land care. It's up to us to prove it."

Until at least 2029, Lachie is committed to making Woolbrook a better place.

And he reckons his unconventional route to farming may be the key to his success.

"I really believe you have to leave the family farm to love farming," Lachie says. "You need to get out and see what everything else is all about. Only then can you appreciate how good it is on the land."

“

It's not enough to say we have a connection to the land. Ownership of the land is not enough either. People have expectations that you're doing the right thing, whether it's animal welfare or land care. It's up to us to prove it.”

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FARMERS' DAUGHTERS

Alejandro Saravia from
Melbourne CBD restaurant
Farmers' Daughters.



Putting Victoria on Your Table

Victorian farmers are making a name for themselves on menus of top restaurants across Melbourne and around the State. “Like never before, Melbourne diners want to know where their food comes from,” says Melbourne chef **Alejandro Saravia**.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Richard Cornish

The Peruvian-born chef says that during COVID lockdowns, people spent a lot of time cooking at home, and they worked out that the best tasting food depends on the quality of ingredients.

“They found out local Victorian producers they like, sometimes they bought from them direct. Now they look out for the names of those farmers.”

At his restaurant, Farmers' Daughters in Melbourne's Exhibition Street, Saravia sources food and beverage solely from Gippsland. “The benefits work for both chef and farmers,” he says. “If we deal directly, we get a shorter supply chain,” says Saravia. “We can give feedback straight to the farmer. They can grow what we need. We champion them on our menu and give them brand recognition. We appear on each other's social media feed. The relationship works both ways, he says.”

Neerim South dairy farmer David Johnston has sold his cheese to restaurants for 40 years. In 1982 he and neighbour Laurie Jensen formed Tarago River Cheese Co. producing the now iconic Gippsland Blue. “We knew straight away we needed restaurants on board to help get the word out,” says Mr. Johnston. “We would go from door to door. Once we had the steady financial relationship with chefs, we would ask them to come to the farm and see the cows, the pastures, our grazing system,” he says. “Then we'd get them making cheese. The sous (under) chefs and apprentices were all involved. They never forget that experience, and they have become rusted-on buyers of our cheese.” As the Tarago River Cheese Co. heads into its 40th year, they are reaching out to restaurants with their Affineur range of specially aged cheese. “Maturing cheese is an expensive process, and we're going to need chefs to get behind it, spread the word.”

Drouin dairy farmer Matt Wilson was a chef in a former career but still loves his fine food. Last summer, he dined at Attica Summer Camp, a pop-up version of Ripponlea restaurant Attica held in Seville in the Dandenong Ranges.

Attica is owned by Chef Ben Shewry, known globally for his avant-garde cuisine, and consistently voted in the top 50 restaurants in the world. Whilst eating, Mr. Wilson noted that the butter being served by Chef Shewry was made by Gippsland Jersey, the small processor Wilson supplies exclusively.

“We got talking,” says Mr. Wilson, “and Ben was keen to know more about how we treated our herd, what the cows ate and how we milked them,” says Mr. Wilson. “He seemed to be well educated about dairy.” Co-owner of Gippsland Jersey, Sallie Jones, says, “Today, the relationship between farmer and chef is not just a supplier and receiver. It is a conversation. We are in contact with them, and they are helping develop our new product development. Chefs gave us feedback on our cultured butter and cultured sour cream (crème fraîche).”

Gippsland Jersey works with five dairy farmers, producing 75 pallets of milk a week and supplying milk, butter, cream, and crème fraîche to some of Melbourne's best restaurants, including Vue de Monde, Society, Stokehouse, Gimlet and Grossi Florentino. She says that having a farmer with a chef's knowledge means her business is getting a stream of food industry intelligence constantly feeding into the company.

“People don't have to be pigeonholed and having chefs who know about farming and farmers who know about food, leads to better dishes in the restaurant and more nuanced NPD (new product development).”

GIPPSLAND JERSEY

Farmer and supplier Matt Wilson
with owner of Gippsland Jersey,
Sallie Jones.



“

*People don't have to be pigeonholed
and having chefs who know about
farming and farmers who know about
food, leads to better dishes in the
restaurant and more nuanced NPD
(new product development).”*

— Sallie Jones, Gippsland Jersey



Down graffiti cloaked Hosier Lane is award-winning Spanish restaurant MoVida, known globally as Australia's best Spanish restaurant. Chef and co-owner Frank Camorra relies on specialist potato suppliers The Spud Sisters for a year-round supply of the best Victorian tubers. Presently Chef Camorra is cooking with Andean Sunrise variety The Spud Sister sourced from Warragul grower Gordon Jones. He has 24ha under potatoes on his 153ha Warragul farm. "Seventy percent of what I grow are the usual varieties," says Mr Jones. "These go to the packers but allows me to grow an organic line and the specialist varieties that I sell at farmers' markets and to restaurants." The farmers' markets put chefs in front of Mr. Jones and his potatoes. "If they like what they taste, they can call The Spud Sisters," says Mr. Jones. "In the old days, we used to pedal down Flinders Lane selling our potatoes direct out the back of the van," he says. "I get great satisfaction knowing that my potatoes are being used in the kitchens of people like Frank (Camorra)," says Mr. Jones.

Judy Croagh from Western Plains Pork, at Mount Mercer 40km south of Ballarat, has been supplying pork to restaurants for 21 years. Frank Camorra is one of her valued customers, as is Flower Drum, and Di Stasio, some of the city's best-known eateries. "In the early days, we had to watch out for restaurants not paying or going into receivership," she says. It is not unheard of for some businesses to extend terms of payment out by weeks and months, effectively using the farmer to bankroll the restaurant's supply of primary products. "But we have an excellent relationship with all our hospitality customers, and it comes down to one thing," says Mrs. Croagh, "and that is communication. It's about being organised and understanding each other's businesses. They know we are a small business and process once a week. If we don't have enough pork cutlet one week, the restaurant knows they need to order in advance," she says. "The restaurants know how to talk to the customer about us. In many cases, it is one family business talking to another."

PICTURED

(L-R) Neerim South dairy farmer and Tarago River Cheese Co. co-owner, David Johnston, and his Gippsland Blue cheese; Melbourne CBD restaurant Farmers' Daughters deli spread featuring Gippsland-sourced cheeses such as Gippsland Blue; fresh spuds from Warragul grower Gordon Jones, which feature in dishes at Melbourne CBD restaurant MoVida.



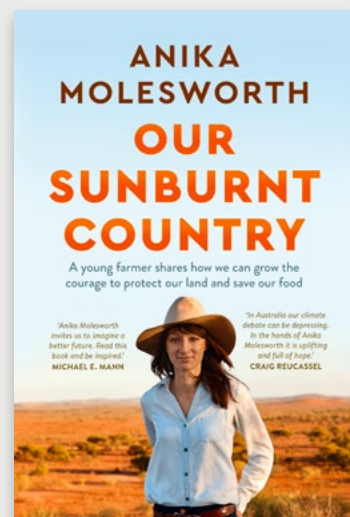
Another farming family are the Bulmers in the Mitchell Valley at Lindenow near Bairnsdale. There Andrew Bulmer and his family, along with a team of 110 employees, grow leafy green vegetables and sprouting brassicas over 600 ha. They truck baby spinach and lettuce leaves to processing facilities from Perth to Brisbane. "Most of my business ends up in bagged salads. I grow vegetables, I fill trucks. I don't have time to deal with restaurants," says the East Gippsland grower. However, Mark Briggs, the award-winning chef at local fish restaurant Sardine Dining refers to the Bulmers when he puts their baby broccoli on the menu. "Bulmers are part of the local community," says Mr. Briggs. "We want to share their story." Andrew Bulmer doesn't mind. "It gives me the thrill to see our name on a menu, although it's not why we do it."

The Bulmers name also appears on the menu at Farmers' Daughters where their greens are used in a salad. "But, having someone else tell your story about who you are as a farmer, where you grow your greens, sheep, grain, it is important," says Mr. Bulmer. "Having a narrative about your product that will follow it past the farm gate is becoming more and more important to consumers, not just in restaurants but in retail big and small. People love a story." 🌱

"Having a narrative about your product that will follow it past the farm gate is becoming more and more important to consumers, not just in restaurants but in retail big and small. People love a story."

— Andrew Bulmer, East Gippsland grower





Scientist, farmer and now author Dr Anika Molesworth's debut work **'Our Sunburnt Country'** is a beautifully written exploration of some of the biggest challenges facing Australian agriculture.

Scientist, farmer and now author Dr Anika Molesworth's debut work **'Our Sunburnt Country'** is a beautifully written exploration of some of the biggest challenges facing Australian agriculture.

You may recognise Anika's name as the 2015 Young Farmer of the Year and one of the founders and current deputy chair of Farmers for Climate Action.

The title of the book draws its origins from the second stanza of Dorethea McKellar's celebrated "My Country" poem "I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains". Just like McKellar, Anika has a clear love for the Australian landscape. Her work is brimming with evocative descriptions of her family's sheep farm in far western New South Wales.

Anika combines her personal experiences including living on a remote sheep farm during the devastating Millennium Drought with her extensive knowledge completing a PhD in agriculture and environmental management to explore climate change and global food security in an interesting and accessible way.

As Anika notes, "farms, food and climate change are inextricably connected, and so are the success and improvements, and breakdowns and failures".

Whilst these are topics can be overwhelming and daunting at times, Anika tackles with them in a way that is both uplifting and filled with optimism. Central to the book is the concept of 'climate courage' which means having the 'mental and moral strength to withstand the fear and difficulty of a changing climate and choosing to act; preserving in the face of hardship and uncertainty; and challenging the status quo despite inevitable barrier, failures and setbacks along the way'. Each chapter ends with a 'Concept to Cultivate' to empower readers to take key learnings and build the story towards solutions, vision and action.

Importantly, the work aims to bridge the gap between rural and urban audiences and explain the important role farmers as stewards of the land on the front line of climate change. The book brings together stories and ideas from farmers, nutritionists, climate scientists and chefs from across the world, to deliver a compelling vision for improving global food system. 🌱

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WORDS
Ryan Moloney

56 thousand RATs, 24 Victorian towns and a whole lot of can-do attitude. Go behind the scenes as the agriculture industry banded together to keep Victorian Farmers and industry moving through the Omicron COVID wave.

If you think back to the not too distant past the word **‘rat’** would most have us clambering for the nearest rodent control method.



PICTURED

(Clockwise L-R) VFF Regional Engagement Representative Kim Tupper handing out RATs; team VFF ready to roll (L-R) Simon McNair, Peter Costello, Mick McCarthy, Chris Taylor and Jane Lovell; Dimboola, one of the 24 stops; and VFF CEO Jane Lovell on the road.

But that was the past and if we’ve learnt anything from the last few years, we know that the times we live in, are anything but conventional.

In more recent times, the word RAT is also known as the abbreviation of Rapid Antigen Test and has become a critical tool in helping to ensure we can go back to a more normal way of life.

During the early months of 2022, RATs became the latest must-have tool for industry to keep operating, resulting in a huge spike in demand. Worryingly, as the latest COVID wave spread rapidly throughout our community, it was easier to catch the virus than secure a RAT.

Despite numerous warnings and requests from the VFF, both the Federal and Victorian Governments failed to supply the stock our industry needed to keep operating, resulting in the most severe worker shortages and supply chain pressures we have experienced during the pandemic.

Faced with an ever-dwindling supply of workers, straining food supply chains and decision-makers unable to fulfil our industry’s needs, the VFF banded together with Fruit Growers Victoria (FGV) and Food & Fibre Gippsland (FFG) to secure of shipment of RATs for the agriculture industry.

“We decided to get on the front foot and secure a supply of tests ourselves,” said VFF CEO, Jane Lovell.

“It became crystal clear that our calls for Government secured RATs to be made available to agricultural and food supply chain businesses were not going to be met in the timeframes needed. For the sake of our farmers and our community it was clear we needed to ramp things up.... and so the ‘Rat Race’ began.”

“We decided to get on the front foot and secure a supply of tests ourselves.”

— Jane Lovell, VFF CEO



The Callout

How do you know how many RATs an entire industry needs at a time when Victoria was recording more than 40 thousand positive cases each day? Ask them of course...

Together with our partners at FFG and FFG, the VFF initiated a survey to ask farmers what they needed to continuing operating.

“The response was instant”, said VFF CEO Jane Lovell.

“In little over 48 hours, we had received 56 thousand orders for RATs from over 600 people located in every corner of Victoria.”

“We had to close orders within two days of us opening them to ensure our shipment would arrive in a timely manner, but I have no doubt there would have been more many thousands of orders if we could have accommodated them.”

The demand was clearly there, now began the tricky task of navigating our strained supply chains and ensuring these RATs reached Victorians farms.



The Process

Delivering 56 thousand RATs to 24 Victorian towns quickly, located in every corner of the State...sounds easy right? The simple process of distribution became a moving beast.

Food & Fibre Gippsland CEO Nicola Pero said the process required pin-point precision, collaboration and at times, nerves of steel.

“Our shipment landed at Sydney Airport days after we placed it. It turns out the process of flying RATs to Australia was the quickest part of the whole thing.”

“Once our RATs touched down, it became just another shipment caught up in the enormous backlog of freight struggling to be released from our freight hubs.”

“Days turned into a week and that’s when nerves began kicking in.”

“There were certainly some touch and go moments as to whether our shipment would make it to Victoria. After all, we had more than 50 thousand RATS that everyone else wanted.”

“I can certainly tell you when my phone rang and they said they are heading to Victoria it was a huge relief. Our industry was crying out for these and we needed to deliver for them.”

“We couldn’t have done it without the help of Ausworkwear & Safety, who absorbed a significant amount of the costs needed to get the job done.”

The RAT Race Begins

Farmers are known the world over for their can-do attitude and for getting the job done, no matter the challenges they face.

With the 56 thousand RATs now in Victoria, the real process of getting them to farmers and other key food supply chain partners could begin in earnest.

Fruit Growers Victoria Business Development Officer Leanne Johansson said it was all hands-on deck once the RATs arrived.

RATS BY THE NUMBERS

56,000

Rapid Antigen Tests

600+ Individual orders

24 Victorian towns

48 Hours of deliveries



“We literally asked staff from the VFF, FGV and FFG to jump in vans and deliver them out to Farmers themselves.”

“Desperate times call for out-of-the-box thinking and given our supply chain was already at capacity, the next best option was our people.”

Over the space of two days, staff from the VFF, FGV and FFG spread out across Victoria to deliver the orders.

“The feedback we received once we arrived in these destinations was incredible. Some people had been looking for weeks and driving from town to town to get them.”

VFF CEO Jane Lovell said it was refreshing to deliver some good news to people, after so much chaos and uncertainty during the pandemic.

“Our Farmers produce the critical food and fibre needed to keep the country fed. For us as industry bodies, it was the least we could do to help ensure farmers could keep farming and supplying the food we all need.”

We extend a huge thanks to everyone involved in making this happen, including **HiCraft Safety, Ausworkwear and Safety and Mobil.**

“Having a worker miss three weeks, because no one could find a test for him will be a thing of the past now.”

— Derryvale Dairy

To see more footage from our RAT race across regional Victoria, head to VFF’s social media:

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Communication is the Key to Successful Succession Planning

Passing on the family farm to the next generation is a challenge – knowing where to start, how to go about developing a plan, knowing what issues need to be addressed, not to mention having to confront some very emotional topics. All of these issues and then some, often result in Succession Planning being consigned to ***“not urgent and too hard basket”***.



It is important to go about the Succession Planning process the right way and in the right order to ensure a successful outcome.

A common mistake is to start with a solution. Solutions provide a sense of progress and achievement, however, presenting a solution to the family not only requires you to make assumptions, which may be way off the mark, but may cause antagonism, hinder your ability to progress the succession process and negatively impact family relationships.

To ensure Succession Planning starts on the right foot, all family members must be brought together to communicate their aspirations, expectations, needs, wants and concerns regarding the transfer of the farming business, management and assets, and associated issues.

Good communication is open, honest and respectful. All family members must feel safe to discuss the most difficult issues, they must be listened to and be understood, they must have equal opportunity to put forward their views and they must feel that have been treated fairly.

The difficulty of these discussions is elevated by the strong emotions involved – family history and legacy, sense of place, the older generation confronting the end of their working lives and even the end of their lives. Engaging a facilitator to manage and guide these conversations is essential.

And who should be included in these discussions? All family members should be included, including off-farm children and spouses/partners of all children. While some may winch at this suggestion, remember that there are

risks of both inclusion and exclusion; the latter most often being the riskier option. Excluded family members may receive a message they are not considered to be part of the family, nor do they have anything of value to contribute. The outcome may be that they de-rail the process.

Through your communication, it will become apparent that many aspirations and issues will be common between family members, some may not be, some will be compatible, some will be incompatible. With this understanding it becomes possible to determine priorities. For example, is it more important to the family that the farm remains intact as a viable business for future generations, or to provide equal inheritance for all children?

Understanding aspirations and their priorities will enable the family to develop options that meet succession objectives. With options on the table, further investigation of these will narrow the choice:

- Which option results in all family members being treated fairly?
- Does the business have the financial capacity to implement the option?
- What are the business ownership structures that will enable the option to be implemented?
- Is the option tax effective?

With the best outcome determined, ensure everyone is in agreement (understanding that compromise is often required by all family members), the plans are documented (legal documents if required), actions plans are documented, together with a timeline of reviews.

Plans must be flexible and reviewed at critical times, such as when family members become involved in or leave the farm, marriage, physical or mental incapacity, death, divorce, changes in aspirations, etc.

And don't delay getting started. The sooner you start the process, more options will be available and the more time you have to implement preferred options. As we age our appetite for change, risk and decision making all diminish, and Succession Planning involves change and complexity. Do not delay!

Remember that the issues involved in Succession Planning are much more than inheritance. There are five broad issues that farming families will need to consider, discuss and come to agreement on as part of their Succession Plan:

- The needs and wants of the older generation – security, financial (both income and capital), on-going roles on the farm, housing, ability to maintain a sense of identity, purpose and community.
- The needs and wants of the younger generation – career opportunities, financial security, management aspirations, ability to take on risk and growth, earning equity in the business and/or land, housing.
- The transition of decision making and management to the younger generation – conditions to be met, training, mentoring.
- How and when asset and business ownership will transfer to the younger generation – during parents' lifetimes, through their estates or a mixture of both?
- Fair inheritance for all children, taking into consideration past assistance, future responsibilities, underpaid wages, contribution to the growth of the business etc.

While the successful transfer of the family farm from one generation to the next is considered to be the main objective of Succession Planning, the ultimate test of success are the enduring and strengthened family relationships that result from on-going open, honest and respectful communication. 🌱

READ MORE ONLINE AT:

www.vff.org.au/publication

www.rabobank.com.au/agribusiness/succession-planning-au

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From Wonder World to Wool *with* Catriona Rowntree

For Catriona, life on her south-western Victorian farm is *infinitely* different to growing up in the city.

WORDS
Anita Donnelly

PHOTOGRAPHY
GK Photography

For a start she can't see her neighbours; her alarm clock is pure bird song; there's very little light pollution; and she needs to let snakes slithering across her driveway, "fulfill their role in the environment as they are a sign it's working perfectly". Catriona is happy to jump out of a plane in the sky, but she will also "jump at the sight of a mouse, 1950s cartoon style", and growing up there was the motto; "no cat too flat" but these days, despite severe allergies, there are four felines on Catriona's farm and they each play their part in keeping those mice numbers down. So she's learnt to live, and even make friends with them. Another point of difference is all the animals these days are outdoors as they've generally been in the trough or somewhere else on the property, getting up to mischief. Her gorgeous Border Collie Jasper is no exception!

Catriona's personal and private lives are completely dictated by the weather gods these days. She is used to being exposed to the elements and filming *Getaway* and *Wonder World* in the outdoors and working with the light, but now Mother Nature has many other consequences. She finds it remarkable how the weather controls their lives, the importance of it on all facets of farming and she's still learning, "is that *good rain* or *bad rain*?" and along with rain or lack of, comes guilt for those who suffer floods or drought.

Passion and Pride

Catriona, husband James and their two sons live on an 1860s property with a bluestone homestead and cottages, and their long and proud history of fine merino wool production averages 18 microns. The work and care it takes every day is constant with blood, sweat and tears literally going into their farm, and being a primary producer. Passion for mixed cropping including merino wool is plentiful as Catriona's farm produces an abundance of canola, wheat, barley and peas. They are an incredibly proud family and relish in knowing their raw materials make bread, beer, and Vegemite for their fellow Australians. Catriona and her family love gently educating and informing others of the food and fibre journey and insist, being open minded and constantly learning and evolving is paramount to their success; "working to a budget is important and because of the highs and lows of farming, it is important to claim it in celebration when there's a good year as there certainly are poor years".

COVID Impacts

Like many fellow Victorian farmers, the biggest issues facing Catriona's farm with regards to sowing and harvest, have been labour shortages, skyrocketing costs, trade related overseas issues and delays: "If you are not open minded, hardworking and up for constant evolution, this is not the game for you. The closed borders were cruel and ignorant and what the pandemic taught us, was we need to produce more in Australia and decrease the imports of what we are able to produce, we need to honour Australian produce. We need to support ourselves and not rely on others so much for basic needs such as food and raw materials".

"If you are not open minded, hard-working and up for constant evolution, this is not the game for you."

Storytelling and New Hobbies

Catriona helps tell the story of farm life organically and authentically. When Catriona first moved to her husband's farm, she was a self-proclaimed square peg in a round hole wondering how she could contribute, "it sure wasn't going to be through cooking and I felt like a twit at everything". Then there was a light bulb moment. Catriona was watching *Landline* and there was a story on Australian wool, the next day, Catriona called the AWI's front desk and offered to help, putting her ability to "talk the leg off a chair" to work, coupled with her passion and pride in her husband and their outputs, and this grew because of her courage to use her recognisable face that's comfortable for many Aussies, who can relate to her as she's been in their living rooms for 30 years.

As social media has evolved, Catriona has been surprised and delighted to learn that her online followers love seeing her life on the land and she's been using Instagram and Twitter as the conduits to tell her story. Posting about her farm wasn't intentionally used to grow her audience and reach, but with a "massive identity crisis" caused by COVID, and her international travel show sponsored by a cruise company, no longer possible, Catriona needed some new hobbies. Answering farming questions directly and "guiding by showing", has been a beautiful way for her to show the care that goes into producing, for her followers.



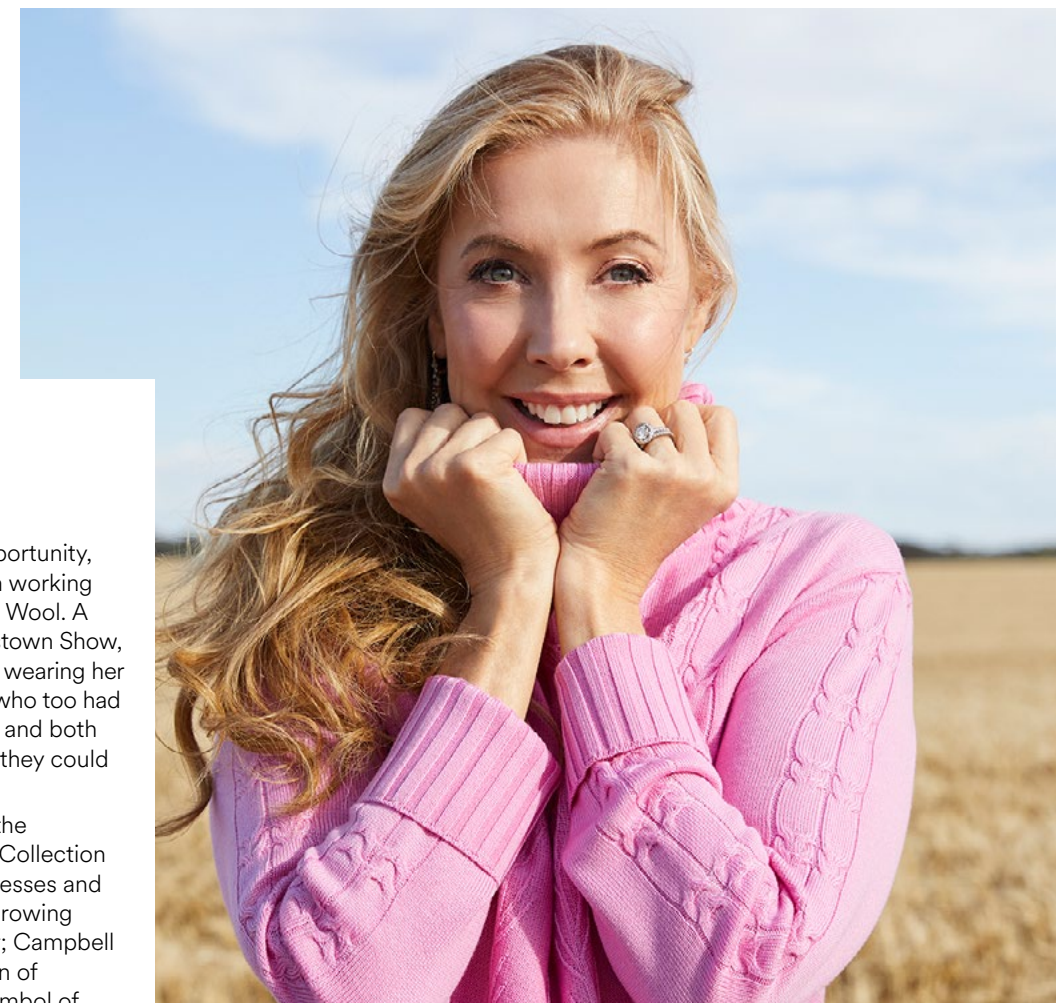
While others were hoarding toilet paper, Catriona was focused on seeds and veggies. She went to the hardware store and brought home a 1m x 1m pop-up veggie box, to which her hubby took one look, laughed and said, "I'll take it from here" and they now have a relatively large veggie patch. The past 2 years and the life-on-farm content that's been generated, has been somewhat soothing and calming and for both Catriona and her followers, it's been a wonderful tonic of escapism and a serendipitous revealing of her double persona, opening her family life to the public gaze, something Catriona has worked hard to keep separate until recently. She's now settled on a wonderful balance and has the pleasure of showing country life yet maintains an element of privacy for her family.

Iris & Wool Collaboration

With challenges, comes opportunity, and something Catriona's been working on is a collaboration with Iris & Wool. A chance encounter at the Jamestown Show, the birthplace of R.M. Williams, wearing her AWI 'hat', she met Emily Riggs who too had a "weak spot for cute farmers", and both were wondering how on earth they could contribute to their families.

Out of this friendship grew the collaboration and the Capsule Collection includes merino wool coats, dresses and knits honouring famous wool growing towns: Jamestown; Little River; Campbell Town; and her Dad's hometown of Quirindi. Grain and wheat, a symbol of abundance and fortune, also feature with some crop details included in the knits which Catriona delights in; her travels too have inspired the fortune and prosperity elements of feng shui. The block colours and flattering lines learnt from years on our TV screens feature in the sustainable fabrics which are high quality, biodegradable, non-toxic, will last for generations and "make our environment smile" as Catriona says.

Wearing Australian wool is certainly not something new to Catriona, whether it's in her sandshoes; a light, spring jumper; Paddington coat travelling in Europe's winters; or even in homewares. Traceability is in demand and an important factor in this collection is the care the animals are cushioned by. "Cleanliness, pureness and care for the animals and fibre and ultimately the garment", is what resonated with Catriona along with her passion for not contributing further to landfill and producing sustainable fashion. Authentic and aligned goals make her "heart sing" and this is a fantastic way for Catriona to "honour her husband, work in step with their proud heritage, and fly the flag for merino wool". The first lambs start to appear on Catriona's Birthday in July each year which adds to the romance of this collection.



What's on the Horizon?

Worried that moving to the farm would kill her career, that hasn't eventuated, and Catriona has plenty to keep her busy. In addition to catching her on-screen in *Getaway*, and *Country House Hunters*, you might see her flying over your farm as she became a pilot earlier this year, something that she's rightly very proud of. Today, fitting in with family and respectfully "dancing around crop and sheep schedules is the juggle but when you love what you do, it's easy". As many Victorians have swapped their media rooms for verandas, the local community has benefited from the different set of skills city folk such as Catriona can bring, as she is now using her profile and voice to honour primary producers, challenge developers, object to land banking and working incredibly hard to keep and protect the land for future generations: "It's a constant battle and on the flip side of living in a beautiful location, if you love where you live, you have to fight for it" and Catriona will use whatever platform she can if she needs to speak up. 🌱



TO VIEW CATRIONA'S CAPSULE COLLECTION VISIT:
www.irisandwool.com

“

If you love where you live, you have to fight for it.”

— Catriona Rowntree



PHOTOGRAPHY Georgie Mann Photography

The Whinneys run a mixed sheep and cattle operation on 2400 hectares at Chatsworth in western Victoria.

Under the business name Chatsworth House Pastoral, they run 12,000 composite ewes, breeding prime lambs for the domestic market, and trade up to 500 cattle a year.

They are passionate about livestock and running a sustainable farm that doesn't compromise the environment.

"A big focus for us is regenerating our landscape, and livestock are a good tool to allow us to do that through our grazing methods," Mrs Whinney said.

A big passion of theirs is farm safety and last year they engaged in the Victorian Farmers Federation's (VFF) Making our Farms Safer (MOFS) program to get expert insight into what they could improve on their farm to better protect themselves, their workers and any contractors that came onto the property.

"We've always had a focus on health and safety, we've been developing a work health and safety program over the last few years," she said.

"We just saw the MOFS program as a great opportunity to make sure we were on the right track and to help us find any gaps in our systems and processes."

As part of the MOFS program, the Whinneys had a visit to their farm from VFF Senior Farm Safety Advisor John Darcy.

"We did a walk around the farm, spending a bit of time in the workshops and wool shed, identifying any issues that may have been present," she said.

Take Small Steps to Protect Your Greatest Asset

Sarah and Tom Whinney believe people are the greatest asset on their farm, which is why they are so passionate about farm safety and will do everything they can to improve it.

FACEBOOK

@ChatsworthHousePastoral

INSTAGRAM

@ChatsworthHousePastoral

WEBSITE

www.chatsworthhouse.com.au



"Then we sat down and just had a really good conversation about what we did, what the gaps were, and what we needed to focus on."

Mr Whinney said the biggest learning from Mr Darcy's visit was around increasing and improving consultation with staff and contractors.


"It's all very well to have the latest safety gear, your high-vis shirts and things like that, but you can't just assume that all your staff are confident and agree with certain procedures in place," he said.

"We are very consistent now in having Monday morning toolbox meetings, and each week, rather than just asking 'does anyone have any incidents to report?', we focus on a specific policy or procedure and see if there's any way we can improve it."

Mrs Whinney said at the end of the day, their main goal was to ensure that "everybody gets home safe".

"People are our greatest asset, without them we can't do anything, that's why we're really passionate about farm safety," she said.

The Whinneys encouraged other farmers to get involved with the MOFS program.

"You can make small steps, you don't have to change everything in one go," Mr Whinney said. 

CONTACT OUR MOFS TEAM ON 1300 882 833, OR VISIT US ONLINE AT:

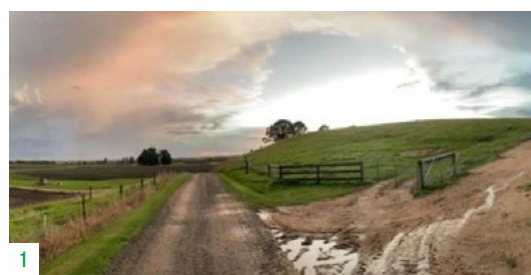
www.vff.org.au/project/making-our-farms-safer



Out and About

Here we showcase some of the best shots from our members all over the State.

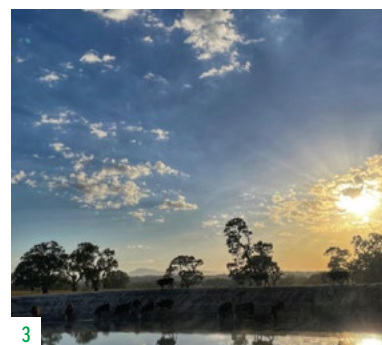
If you have a great photo of your farm that you would like published, send it to media@vff.org.au and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



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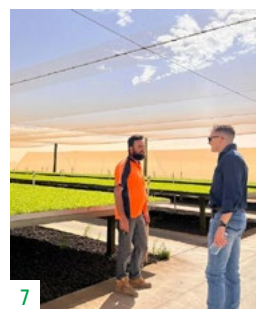
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1. The stunning Calulu countryside looking lush
(credit Bernadette Bulmer)
2. A late summer storm menacing Irymple
(credit 1890 on the Vine)
3. Reflection perfection in Maroona
(credit Balrock Farm)
4. AFL Country Round between Geelong and Essendon at the MCG on 19 March
(credit Women of the MCC)
5. Mum keeping close watch on her twins
(credit David Gibb)
6. Our tiniest farmers hard at work in Camperdown
(credit Buukaar Waruung Beekeepers)
7. Daniel from the VFF's Policy team catching up with local farmers to understand some policy concerns regarding biosecurity in Werribee South
(credit Danyel Cucinotta)
8. Transmission Lines Protest at Parliament on 8 March
(credit Anita Donnelly)



Future Shaping Year

G'day readers,

We wanted to take the opportunity with this edition of 'The Last Word' to talk about some of the significant policy work and progress that has been happening at the VFF.

It's a big year in 2022 with a Federal and Victorian election. This is why the VFF exists and why we, as staff, get up and go to work each day: the opportunity to influence decision makers and push our priority issues.

For the Federal Election, the NFF have adopted the slogan of 'Time to Thrive: Stronger regions for all Australians' and five big ideas to strengthen our regions. These big ideas include a \$2 billion fund to reward land managers who improve the health of their landscape, reform of Australia's competition laws to protect farmers from unfair practices and the establishment of a \$5 billion Rural Telecommunications Fund to improve connectivity for remote Australians.

For the State Election the VFF is currently developing our policy platform with a focus on a 'Fair Go for Regional Victoria'. The VFF is looking for

commitments to address the inequity in the Victorian rating system, serious investment in our country roads and infrastructure, the reinvigoration of the Landcare partnership between farmers and government, more funding to address farm crime plus more.

We'll be continuing to talk with our members to inform our priorities and encourage members to get in touch if they have big ideas or local projects they want to see funded.

We are also busy informing the development of Victoria's new Animal Welfare Act that will tackle issues such as sentience and the use of pain relief, and the VFF Policy Council recently adopted new Right to Repair, Low Emission Vehicles and Traditional Owner Water policies. These can all be viewed on the VFF website.

2022 is a big year and we look forward to engaging with you throughout it. If you have an issue, need advice or want to get involved in our policy work, get in touch at policyteam@vff.org.au.

The VFF Policy Team



TIME TO THRIVE

2022 is shaping as a huge, future shaping year.

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