



Welcome to the Public Edition of my notes for July 2018

Approximate read time: 12 minutes

Conference

I came away from Conference this year with my head filled with ideas and challenges. Having the open Forum, which Rachel Walker facilitated, helped meet the need of providing an opportunity for owner members to raise issues. Some were resolved, others can be considered in Districts. The ideas session facilitated by Christine Fowles, and the social media session facilitated by Tabitha Hazlett & Tryphena Carter, provided opportunities for the sharing of ideas, experience, and knowledge. One of the primary reasons for getting together.

Speakers Erana Stevens (NZ Shearing Champs Event Manager) and Sam McIvor (Beef+Lamb CEO) both illustrated the importance, in their presentations about their organisations and work, of a strategic Plan – being clear why they exist, and what they need to do to be relevant and successful.

When we planned the session for the RAS Strategic Plan, we had hoped there might have been more discussion so owner members would have had a clear view on why we exist. The 'Why' has to be clear and agreed to ensure energy and resources are appropriately channelled.

A special thanks to Debbie and Christine who responded to suggestions from last conference and put together a great conference.

What's our 'Why'

We have embarked on a refresh of the strategic plan. The purpose of strategic planning is to help the organisation do a better job, because a plan focuses the energy, resources and time of everyone in the same direction. It involves stepping back from our day to day operations and asking where our organisation is headed and what its priorities should be.

We have had several sessions one with representatives from Districts and again at conference. The revised version from conference will go out to Districts to facilitate owner member contribution and engagement.

Executive member Rachel Walker is leading the Planning process and will be joined by a member of the Youth Reference Panel.

At Conference Rachel showed an excerpt of "*Start with why*" by Simon Sinek. Simon also has one of the most popular Ted talks of all time. In his book Simon highlights the importance of an organisation defining WHY they do things. Having a clearer sense of WHY would breathe new life into the RAS.

Here is the link to the full presentation:

https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

Optimism

In the competitive Events environment, as we are with our A&P Shows, optimism is an essential ingredient contributing to success. Some people just happen to be more positive than others, optimism isn't strictly a personality trait – it's a learnable skill.

Psychologist Martin Seligman coined the term “learned optimism” in the '90s. It's the idea that with a little conscious practice, we can strategically tamp down our brains negativity bias toward seeing solely the downside of things. We call them pessimists. On the opposite end, those with a positivity bias are termed optimists. But Seligman's key insight, which has been deepened by brain science, is that where we fall on this spectrum isn't fixed as the labels suggest.

Negativity bias isn't a bad thing. It's what helps us pay attention to threats and risks for one thing. Being able to intentionally shift our mind-set toward optimism can activate the brain areas involved in creativity and problem solving. It can also lower stress – another key ingredient to making good decisions - so we can see our options more clearly and choose among them unclouded by fear or irrational emotion.

Optimism isn't just thinking positively and suspending critical analysis. It is about tapping into our brain's problem solving functions and creating a state of calm that lets us examine all the issues in the clear light of day.

You can read more about this here <https://www.fastcompany.com/40557561/can-this-four-minute-brain-hack-turn-you-into-an-optimist>.

Mycoplasma bovis

During the round of District AGMs a question was raised about the role of the RAS in distributing information. With the focus solely on the elimination of the disease, members felt there should be productive and educative information on living with the disease, as many other countries do, should eradication fail. As a result Districts adopted a recommendation to go to conference.

In short they were asking for our showing movement to be provided with comprehensive guidelines for the continued showing of cattle. We also wanted to know whether the management of cattle herds is a common denominator – e.g. wintering barns – and as to what effect, if any, different management practices might have in terms of aggravating or ameliorating the spread and consequences of the disease.

Most importantly, considering New Zealand and Norway were the only two countries which had been without the disease, we wanted to know what contingency plans the Government and MPI intend to implement if the disease could not be eliminated, given the commercial cattle industry continues to prosper and cattle showing continues unabated and unhindered in dozens of other countries.

Also at conference we considered whether the RAS should give direction on whether or not to continue with showing cattle. Time was made to discuss the issues of *Mycoplasma bovis*.

A panel for the discussion included the Minister of Agriculture Hon Damien O'Conner, CEO of Beef + Lamb Sam McIvor and Carol Barnao from Dairy NZ. Carol is the GM Responsible Dairy, head of the policy team and also a member of the National Response Team for *M bovis*. There were strong views for and against and ultimately the decision was to recommend that shows follow the MPI Guidelines in making the decision to hold, or not, cattle classes.

You can sign up for regular updated information on *mycoplasma bovis* from MPI here - <http://mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/>

Rural Ambassador

There were five finalists for the title of the Harcourts RAS Rural Ambassador to represent NZ at the Australasian competition to be held at the Perth Royal Show in 2019. The judges were Mr. John Grigg, a Farmer & immediate Past RAS President from Hororata in Canterbury; Mrs Kay Worthington, Journalist & Youth Mentor from North Canterbury, and Mr Stuart Pescini, Director/Manger Harcourts Fielding-Palmerston North.

As always, no competition of this prestige can survive without generous sponsors and supporters and we appreciate of the support from Harcourts, Hawkes Bay A&P Society and NZ Young Farmers.

The District finalists were:

- Courtney Davies – Northern District
- Emma Pollitt – Eastern District
- Samantha Tennent – Western District
- Nicola Lee – Central District
- Brooke Fleet – Southern District

The title winner was Courtney Davies, a 22 year old from Dairy Flat north of Auckland. Courtney became involved with the RAS through her involvement with Ayershire cattle showing and breeding. Currently Courtney is in her 4th year at Massey University studying for a Masters in Natural Sciences.

Courtney is the Youth representative on the Northern District RAS Council and convenor of the District Youth Parader competition. Courtney is passionate about changing the world through education, science and young people.

She is pictured here with Kevin Cholmondeley-Smith, Chairman of the Northern District, as Courtney prepares to launch the prize giving for the Northern District Young Parader competition.

This year all Districts agreed that their District Rural Ambassador Finalist would be invited to spend a year on the District Council.



Northern District Young Parader 2017-18 Prize Giving

Congratulations to Courtney Davis for organising a great prize giving event.

Throughout the season, 57 competitors ranging from 5-19 years of age, exhibited their dairy & beef cattle in the District's Young Parader competition. The top 4 place getters in each of the four classes were recognized at the special prize giving event. All of the finalists received a ribbon to mark their participation in the competition.

The venue had to change to a larger one in Whangarei because of the near 100 people who attended. I had the privilege of presenting them with their sash. The venue was the ASB Stadium on the old A&P Show grounds.

Success is not a rotisserie oven – you can't just set it and forget it.

Greg Moskovitch is head of search at Splashbox, a Melbourne based digital marketing agency. Here are some hi-lights from an article he wrote which I felt had relevance helping our Shows plan for success.

Simply put, your business isn't going anywhere without a plan to attract customers, a strategy, marketing investment and an ongoing improvement in your product offering. No one wants your product just because you produce it. You have to be prepared to work actively to achieve results.

It takes time, effort, and more than a few setbacks to create anything good enough that many people want to pay for it – and then keep coming back for more.

Whatever it is that you do, just don't be passive about it.

Attracting competitors

I met David Taylor at the Central Districts AGM meetings where he told me about his plan to encourage more people to exhibit roses and to make sure they understood how to exhibit their blooms correctly. I liked his idea to attract competitors and to help raise standards.

Their Rose Workshop was held in Kirwee at the Courtney A&P Showgrounds the week before conference and it went really well. There was a great response with about 30 people, mainly locals, but also some from other Shows attending.



Pictured are David with Bill Girl, who was doing the pruning demonstration.

The main aim of the workshops is to answer questions about what the judges are looking for and how to achieve that, e.g. pruning and a how-to on presentation. David is keen to encourage other Shows to hold similar Workshops, and will help where he can.

He wants Shows to put in their schedules that 'Roses must have foliage'. Judges award points on bloom, stem, foliage etc., and you cannot tell the health of a plant when there is no foliage.

The Courtney Show have decided to carry on with other workshops, and this last weekend held a workshop for exhibiting Garden Vegetables.

Royal Show Performance Heifer and Bull Class

Max Tweedie and Simon Collin from Hawkes Bay A&P presented to conference their proposal for the performance heifer and bull class.

The New Zealand Beef Seedstock industry is evolving. There is now wide acceptance of performance recording and its value in the breeders toolbox for making selection decisions.

With performance recording comes genetic evaluation. Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) are the product of genetic evaluation and have been recently proven many times over in the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics Beef Progeny Test. Incorporating a performance component (using EBVs) into the Royal Show schedule has genuine merit - as it is now an important part of the way farmers select animals for their breeding programmes.

This is not to say that the foundation of stockmanship and physical stock assessment should be ignored but rather enhanced in this instance. Providing a class of this kind assists with the need for the Royal Agricultural Society to maintain relevance and prominence within New Zealand and agriculture.

The class format had been trialled (and well received) at the NZ Beef Expo and HB Show local classes. The proposal for a Performance Yearling Heifer and Performance Yearling Bull class was approved at conference.

Encouraging simple brilliance

Pesticides help protect plants, however there is a great deal of controversy around their damaging effects in the environment. Researchers have found decades old pesticide particles as far away as Antarctica, which suggests our entire planet is currently covered in the stuff.

The problem is that a lot of plants are water repelling. Only a small percentage of pesticide applied to crops actually stays there. Pesticides are mostly water based, so when sprayed onto plants, droplets either bounce or roll off the surface. This happens in milliseconds.

Maher Damak, a 27 year old scientist in the USA, is the winner of the 2018 Lemelson – MIT Student Prize, which honours promising young inventors around the country. It rewards students working on technology based inventions that involve food, water or agriculture. He thinks he can drastically cut the pesticides we use, by making them stickier.

The fix is an additive made from charged polymers to make pesticide droplets stick to crops. After an quick and inexpensive retrofit of pesticide applicators, farmers can use significantly less pesticide in their fields without harming their harvest or the environment. Whilst Maher is still working on improving chemical formulations in the lab, theoretically it could work on any plant anywhere.

My point in writing this is not to create a debate about pesticides, rather to ask how a relatively young person came up with this seemingly simple way to deal with a major environmental issue & cost to farming.

Maybe we should be using our A&P movement to encourage young people to come up with creative and innovative ideas to improve our ability to feed the growing world population.

Rural Women NZ - Wool 101

Melva Robb is the Secretary of the Marlborough Provincial Rural Women and they are leading the development of a show to get wool and it uses out to more people. They are calling it 101 ways with wool and the committee is called Wool 101.

They are working with the Marlborough A&P, acknowledging their experience running the local A&P Show in Blenheim, to hold the show in March 2019, during Wool Week, at the Marlborough A&P show grounds. They are looking at using the A&P show shearing shed and yards for shearing, wool handling and the yards for different breeds of sheep, plus different competitions to do with wool and bales of wool. They are hoping to have displays and active demonstrations with many different companies and fibre guilds coming to show their wears and some stalls selling items made from wool.

They are working out packages to send to schools so they can get the school children involved and hopefully then schools might come to the Show to see how they have got on, plus they are going to challenge other rural organisations to make some sort of sculpture and be judged and have them on display so that people will come to see how they have got on.

Could this be an opportunity for A&P Districts to team up with their Provincial Rural Women to share the running of a similar event during wool week?

I have met again with Fiona Gower, National President of Rural Women NZ, who facilitated my introduction to their CEO, Penelope England. I met up with Penelope at the Field Days and she attended our Rural Ambassador finals at conference despite not being too well.

Australasian Young Judges and Paraders Championship

I am looking forward to the Adelaide Royal Show in September where our NZ RAS Young Judges, Paraders and Rural Ambassador will be competing in the Australasian Championships.

Our team includes experience and newcomers:

Annaliese Goettler - Rural Ambassador & Team Leader

Dairy Cattle Judge – Courtney Davies

Dairy Cattle Parader - Jennifer Thomas

Beef Cattle Judge – Emma Pollitt

Beef Cattle Parader - Emma Pollitt

Meat Breeds Sheep Judge - Scott Maultstaid

Merino Fleece Judge - Courtney Davies

Poultry Judge - (a new class) - Courtney Davies

Dairy NZ Strategy Refresh

Dairy NZ's Chief Executive Tim Mackle reckons the strategic vision for the dairy sector will lead to a longer term conversation about what New Zealand's future farm and food systems could look like. Their strategy, 'Dairy Tomorrow' is a joint sector led initiative involving Dairy NZ, Federated Farmers, DCANZ, and Dairy Women's Network.

This current refresh of their strategy has highlighted that dairy's challenges and opportunities are just one part of a far broader context to define and work toward a future vision. They make the point that working alone will not solve their challenges nor realise their potential. Dairy NZ believes they must find new ways to partner and collaborate for success.

I had asked the RAS United Breeds Society Council, prior to conference, to consider the strategy and report to conference what impact the strategy might have on the showing movement and to determine if the strategy provided opportunities for us. Unfortunately they did not have time to report to us so hopefully we will hear from them in the not too distant future or at least from their Dairy Committee.

In the meantime I have met with the External Relations Manager for Dairy NZ who has agreed to us getting together again to discuss how they and the A&P Showing Network might work together for mutual benefit. If you would like have a look at the Dairy Industry Strategy 2017 - 2025, you can see it here <http://www.dairytomorrow.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/dairy-strategy-2017-A4-booklet-Part3.pdf>

Looking back

Looking back at the last season I remember particularly Oxford hosting the Royal Event for Sheep and having a great exhibition of over 400 sheep, and a champion Ewe being competed amongst 16 breeds.

It was also great to see some excellent exhibits from the Rare Breeds group. The most interesting rare breed for me was the four horned sheep.

The 175th BOI Show in Waimate North was a tremendous quintessential rural show and it was a privilege to honour long serving members with RAS medals of excellence.

The large team of young people running the Young Judges & Paraders Finals at our Royal Show hosted by Hawkes Bay A&P.

The innovative interactive & informative display pulled together by Otago Taireri to replace there being no cattle classes.

And finally, the opportunity to guest judge the Thoroughbred off the track class at Dannevirke (along with and under the guidance of an experienced and listed RAS judge).



Final word

Before we know it the new season will get underway. Prior to that we will have Equestrian Judges seminars and Equestrian forums. And District Councils will be scheduling meetings to discuss the RAS Strategy and beginning to make their own plans.

I hope you get through winter alright and all the best for the new season.

Geoff Smith

President, Royal Agricultural Society NZ (RAS)
<http://www.ras.org.nz/>

Check out the RAS -Harcourts Referral - it means \$\$\$ for your Association –www.ras.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RAS-Harcourts-Referral.pdf