

Farming The Year Ahead

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Vet scheme opens up rural delights

Young graduate veterinarians are discovering there's plenty of positives working in a rural practice. **Kate Taylor reports.**



Country life: Charlotte Matthews loves working in rural Wairoa and is thankful for the opportunities she has been given through the vet bonding scheme.

THE RURAL vet bonding scheme is working wonders on the rural vet scene in Wairoa. Graduate rural vet Charlotte Matthews has been working at VetEnt in the northern Hawke's Bay town since the start of the year.

She says it's a true rural practice because of its isolation.

"You see a lot more and do a lot more – because you're it. The dominance of sheep and beef farms here was a positive attraction as well and it's nice and sunny after five years in Palmerston North."

The 24-year-old former Napier Girls' High School student grew up in Napier with mum in town and dad on a lifestyle block.

"I always wanted to be a vet. I took a year off after school to do competitive kayaking and had a job as a receptionist in a law firm in Christchurch (where my coach was).

"It was good to have that year off, to do something other than study and to make sure vet school was what I wanted. It gave me a different perspective on life. I applied, got in and made that first semester really count. Success was my only option. So I spent the next five years at Massey."

The scheme is open to 30 newly qualified veterinarians from Massey University every year who have secured

jobs in rural practices working with farm animals (a certain percentage of the revenue has to be production animals to qualify). At the end of their third year of employment, they are entitled to a \$33,000 payment, and payments of \$11,000 at the end of their fourth and fifth years.

Miss Matthews says that will come in extremely handy with a \$50,000-plus student loan on the books. "It's a very cool way of addressing the lack of people entering the production animal field and it does attract people to places that normally might struggle to get vets."

She says she's not on her own when it comes to figuring out life as a new vet. Wairoa VetEnt is a "young practice" with two other vets with first-hand experience of the rural vet bonding scheme – Alanda has recently finished and Cleo is in her fourth year.

The three of them have entered a team in the Lake Waikaremoana Challenge multisport event (Cleo running, Alanda cycling and Charlotte kayaking). "The outdoor opportunities in Wairoa are awesome. Who wouldn't want to work up here? There's the lake, the bush and

Mahia... it's a great place to live and work."

VetEnt Wairoa has a Vet Club that supplies a house rent-free to young vet graduates. Miss Matthews says VetEnt also sends its new graduates away together seven times a year on its structured new graduate programme.

Senior vet Joe Bennett is her supervisor-manager. "Charlotte has settled in nicely and has found her rhythm with the work and within the team," he says.

"The graduates learn so much in the first few years and it's nice for both us and the clients to get the benefits of their enthusiasm. The bonding scheme is one of our drawcards – we can attract people and they want to stay here for a decent length of time."

Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy says the scheme is in its fifth year and is making real headway in tackling the rural vet shortage.

"Since the start of the scheme in February 2009, 136 new vets have joined and the retention rate is an outstanding 96 per cent."

Data collector captures extra value

FARMER interest in Gallagher's new HR4 Hand Held EID Tag Reader and Data Collector is running high after a successful launch at the 2013 National Fieldays.

The HR4 – an innovative animal management tool that assists farmers to make immediate stock-management decisions – made its debut at Mystery Creek in June and earned Gallagher a Fieldays International Innovation Award.

The HR4 borrows from the design of Gallagher's popular HR3 tag reader but has the added functionality of being a powerful data collector.

As well as performing the crucial task of tag reading, it can also be used for recording treatments, animal traits and recalling historic information on an animal at the time it is scanned, says Gallagher product manager Daniel Loughnane.

The ability to record and display information on a specific animal is an advantage because it enables on-the-spot stock-management decisions to be made. This can lead to considerable savings in

time and money, Mr Loughnane says.

"If you are using a conventional hand-held tag reader you would typically record extra stock information at the point of scanning by connecting to an EID weigh scale system or by using the old-fashioned notebook.

"But the HR4 gives you the ability to record and display detailed information on an animal, regardless of whether you are at the weighing site or not. It also saves you the time and effort of having to re-enter data into a weigh scale or a PC."

The HR4 enables the user to record and sort multiple traits such as breed, sex, condition score and pregnancy status.

The HR4 uses Gallagher's new Animal Performance Standard Software (APS). This animal database interfaces with all Gallagher readers and weigh scales, making it easy to transfer data between devices and to analyse all animal information in one place (software is included with the reader at no extra cost).

Bluetooth-enabled, the HR4 reader is supplied with a standard USB cable for



direct and easy connection to a PC.

Gallagher Group marketing manager Mark Harris says the HR4 is the next big thing in EID technology, describing it as "the most capable yet simple to use hand held reader on the market".

Firearms must be treated with respect

COMPLACENCY around firearms is one of the biggest concerns of the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

The council gives safety lectures to about 10,000 new firearms applicants every year in New Zealand, says Nicole McKee, its programme manager for firearms and hunter safety. It also administers the firearms safety test on behalf of New Zealand Police.

Knowing the seven basic principles of firearm safety is a must:

- Treat every firearm as loaded (check it yourself and don't take anyone's word that a firearm is unloaded).
- Always point a firearm in a safe direction.
- Load a firearm only when ready to fire (and unload if game gets away).
- Identify your target beyond all doubt

(never fire at movement, colour, sound or shape, and assume movement, colour, sound or shape to be human until you prove otherwise).

- Check your firing zone. (Be aware of what you could hit in the area between you and your target and in the area beyond; never fire when companions are ahead of you; it is unsafe to shoot at a target on the skyline and beware of ricochets from flat or hard surfaces such as rocks, snow, water, trees, water towers or other buildings on a farm).
- Store firearms and ammunition separately, secure against theft and never leave firearms in an unattended vehicle.
- Last but not least, avoid alcohol and drugs when handling firearms.

"These seven basic rules of firearms safety are as relevant today as they were

when first introduced in 1984," she says. "They are easily understood and are commonsense rules. It is clearly common sense to never point a firearm at anyone or yourself."

There are other practical steps to take to protect yourself with a firearm, such as unloading it when crossing fences.

"Injury or death this way is actually a common theme and very simple to avoid."

Also, make sure ammunition is not wet from river or creek crossings or dirty from being dropped on the ground, and there is no mud, moisture or grit on the ammo or around the action.

"Secure firearms after use. Clean them and lock them up.

"Do not leave them on the quad bike, on the horse or down in the milking shed," he says.

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