

# Groundspread

## Meet Matthew

| 2020 young achiever

## Dangerous Goods

| NZGFA guide

## Hazardous Substances

| How to stay safe

## Feature

| The great sales tax rebate scheme





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*Kenneth Irons is the sole owner and managing director of Precision Tracking (NZ) Ltd and Precision Farming Ltd.*

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## From the President



President John Schultz  
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Spring has well and truly sprung! With the variability of the weather, the pressure has certainly been on.

The growing environmental plan to farm to the calendar has effectively condensed our spreading window. This increases the strain on the entire logistics from the supply to spreading. We have all seen this coming, yet have not put our collective heads together. This is an untenable situation when so much is at stake. Now is the time for more cooperation and planning by ALL affected parties to help mitigate this trend.

With the increasing imposition of environmental standards we, as spreader operators, must take more responsibility around what mixes we are trying to spread. Just because we have spread that mix in the past, or an advisor has come up with that brew, it is not acceptable to turn a blind eye and continue merrily along. I am NOT proposing that our industry enters into the world of nutrient advisory, but we are the experts in nutrient application and therefore we should be, at the very least, talking to our customers if we are presented with mixes that compromise the accuracy and quality of our spread.

It was particularly pleasing to receive a joint presentation from Ballance and Ravensdown around proposed protocols and health and safety standards around their combined sites. This type of maturity and cooperation has long been missing and hopefully this will only be the sharp end of the

wedge on dealing with common issues to the benefit of shareholders and users alike.

Other news is that your association is supporting the FQC in the development of a machine test (under the Spreadmark banner) for liquid nutrient application. This will broaden the scope of Spreadmark, strengthen the brand and further acceptance that Spreadmark is the best standard to use.

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Phil Johnson of Candrive, winner of the 2020 Graymont-sponsored NZGFA Health & Safety Award with Kim Riley, Canterbury branch secretary

## NZGFA Awards review

Following the success of the 2019 and 2020 NZGFA Awards, the awards committee has decided that it's time to undertake a review of the entry and judging processes. Award judge, and NZGFA Vice President Graeme Martin, says this will ensure the inclusion of award sponsors in the decision-making as well as facilitate discussion around simplifying the collation of results. "In addition, we would like to introduce to the judging panel, one or two independent adjudicators and category experts. This will certainly help if we have a situation where nominees tie."

The committee will also update the nomination form to make the form-fill easier. This will include prompts where specific information is required.

## Rim certification

In a move to clarify the certification requirements for wide rims, Nathan Callander, NZGFA Transport Representative, is seeking confirmation from the NZTA. He says it is currently unclear as to what the specifications are for wide rims to be used on New Zealand roads and whether an engineer is required to sign off the fitting of new wide rims. "Demand for wide rims is high and if we can find out the exact specifications and requirements, this would mean we can look for another supplier of wide rims for our industry."

## Co-ops smooth out complaints process

Co-ops Ballance Agri-Nutrients and Ravensdown have been working

together to implement a robust process for complaints and feedback for NZGFA members. While both companies set up dedicated email addresses at the start of the year for feedback around product quality, they have now broadened the scope of the reporting to include other issues, such as wait times and health and safety queries. In addition, feedback will be reviewed by either Ballance or Ravensdown plus the NZGFA.

Find out more about the new process on page 15.

## Test tray sizes approved

In light of increasing difficulty in sourcing testing trays within New Zealand, the FQC has accepted the NZGFA's proposal to allow additional collector tray sizes for use during Spreadmark testing. As a result, The



Spreadmark Code of Practice has now been updated to include the new tray specification of “nominally 500 x 500 x 95 mm of collector depth”.

James McCloy, NZGFA Lime & Fertiliser Representative and owner of EuroAgri Ltd has been instrumental in resolving the issue with tray sizes, as well as sourcing an offshore supply. “Now this is sorted, we can import collector trays and resume certification testing confident in the knowledge that we are using an acceptable tray size and that we won’t run out of supply.”

James is keen to explain that while EuroAgri Ltd has placed an order, it will

take a bit of time before the products arrive. However, he reassures NZGFA members that they will be notified of how and when they can order trays.

## Lime issue settled

The NZGFA has acknowledged the swift action taken by Graymont in investigating recent safety concerns over a drift issue with a lime product. Abnormal dust clouds from the product during certain conditions were reported by some operators in the Waikato area. Graymont, a company which prides itself on its commitment to health and safety, and the proud sponsor of the NZGFA

Health & Safety Award, was quick to address the problem and provide a solution by way of increasing the moisture levels in the product. John Schultz, NZGFA President, says this is a fine example of industry collaboration.

## Wind drift guidance on way

The NZGFA National Council has drafted a guidance document outlining how best to approach risk associated with the wind drift of fertiliser products.


The document, which is specifically for NZGFA members, has been sent to Worksafe for review. Once approved by Worksafe, the guidelines will be available to members and posted in the member-only section of the website.



Members will be notified shortly as to how they can order trays




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## When fertiliser and ‘DGs’ cross over

Occasionally fertiliser can fall into the classification of “Dangerous Goods” (DGs). Whether a product is classified as DGs is dependent on the ingredients and the volume of product being transported. Special mixes incorporating micro-nutrients are an example of when a DG classification may be triggered.

There are legal obligations that must be met when Dangerous Goods are being transported. This means that groundspread fertiliser applicators are required to meet these obligations.

The following information is a summary of how you will know if your load is classified as a DG and what you will need to do if the load you are carrying is classified as DGs.

## How will I know if my load is classified as Dangerous Goods?

Anyone supplying product known to be classified as DGs has a legal obligation to notify drivers and provide the relevant documentation on collection.

This notification is likely to be in the form of a Dangerous Goods Declaration that provides all relevant information you need to know about the goods to be carried. This includes the Class, UN number and weight of the Dangerous Goods.

Several major suppliers have worked with the NZGFA and implemented systems so they can notify ground spreaders prior to collection whether the load ordered is classified as DGs.

## Some examples

Examples of Ballance products that may be classified as DGs (dependent on volumes) are Micromax products, NutriMax products, and Selenium, Cobalt Mix, Zinc products and Copper Sulphate mixes where the listed products are above the trigger limits.

Examples of Ravensdown products that may be classified as DGs

(dependent on volumes) are Zinc Sulphate, Zinc Oxide, Selprill Double, Cobalt Sulphate, Manganese Sulphate and Copper Sulphate mixes where the listed products are above the trigger limits.

## What do I do if the load is classified as Dangerous Goods?

If you are notified that the product you are carrying is classified as a DG you must meet the following requirements:

- Determine whether the driver requires a Dangerous Goods licence.
- Ensure the vehicle has the correct placarding.
- Ensure the vehicle is securely loaded.
- Ensure the load is covered.
- Ensure dangerous goods are segregated from other goods they may react with.






- Carry emergency information provided and ensure it is accessible through the driver’s door while standing on the ground outside the vehicle.

## Will the driver need a Dangerous Goods Licence?

Generally fertilisers carried by ground spreaders for agricultural use will be Class 9 with a UN classification of UN3077 or UN3082. A Dangerous Goods licence is NOT required to carry these.

A Dangerous Goods licence would be required if you were carrying a load with over 1,000kg of product classified as Class 9 other than with UN Code 3077 or 3082. Currently there are no products matching this description that would be carried by ground spreaders.

## What do I need to do if my load is classified as Dangerous Goods?

PLACARDING REQUIREMENTS			
Aggregated weight of DG is <b>under</b> 50kg	Aggregated weight of DG is over 50kg <b>AND</b> more than one Class	Aggregated weight of DG is over 50kg <b>AND</b> a single Class <b>AND</b> less than 2500kg	Aggregated weight of DG is over 50kg and <b>AND</b> a single Class <b>AND</b> more than 2500kg
No placarding required	Placard with either the *primary risk placard  <b>OR</b> a black and orange horizontally striped placard that bears the word dangerous or hazardous. 	Placard with either the *primary risk placard  <b>OR</b> a black and orange horizontally striped placard that bears the word dangerous or hazardous. 	Placard with the *primary risk placard. 
<b>Placards must:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be at least 250mm along each edge</li> <li>• Be clean, visible, unobscured and placed on a contrasting background so it can be seen from a distance of 25m in daylight</li> <li>• Not obscure any legally required markings or plates</li> <li>• Be vertical or as near vertical as possible</li> <li>• Be attached in such a way that it will not become dislodged under normal transport conditions</li> <li>• NOT be displayed when dangerous goods are not being transported</li> </ul>			

\* Primary risk - means the most significant hazard posed by the substance and is the hazard by which the substance is classified.

### Tour of the regions - Waikato

Groundspread Magazine has been taking a tour of the regions to find out more about what goes on at each of the seven branches.

We spoke to Waikato Secretary, Keith McGuire, about the challenges and opportunities faced and embraced by this branch.

#### How do you find running the branch?

The branch is spread over a reasonably larger area covering the Waikato, King Country, Bay of Plenty and Central Plateau and south and east of Taupo. We typically manage to achieve a good turnout at meetings which is pleasing as it makes it easier to arrange ongoing meetings and have proactive discussions.

Each meeting is structured around a specific topic. For example, we have recently discussed different aspects of health and safety as well as the freshwater policy and its implications for us. As a collective, we all work well together and leverage our individual experiences to support each other. This input is really the best part of running this branch.

#### How many member companies do you have?

We have 17 member companies – this number has reduced due to some amalgamation of some businesses in recent times. In addition we have two active life members. We are flattered with our Associate member companies numbering 11. These Associates always contribute positively.

#### What are the challenges for ground spreaders in your region?

Like most of the branches our challenges are the same - be it the weather, product supply, quality product or farmer expectations around service and capability. Attracting good

quality operators is a big challenge for all businesses large and small but I think we as members present a professional service with quality gear. Going forward, new legislation will be an ever present challenge but we believe the industry best practice tools such as Fertmark & Spreadmark will be of value to us all.

#### How do you encourage new members?

Our membership does not represent more than 50% of all ground spreading operators in our region. We have used a membership drive to attract members and also have the “word of mouth” method. We have had some success but obviously would like more members to join up.

#### What is the biggest benefit of joining your branch?

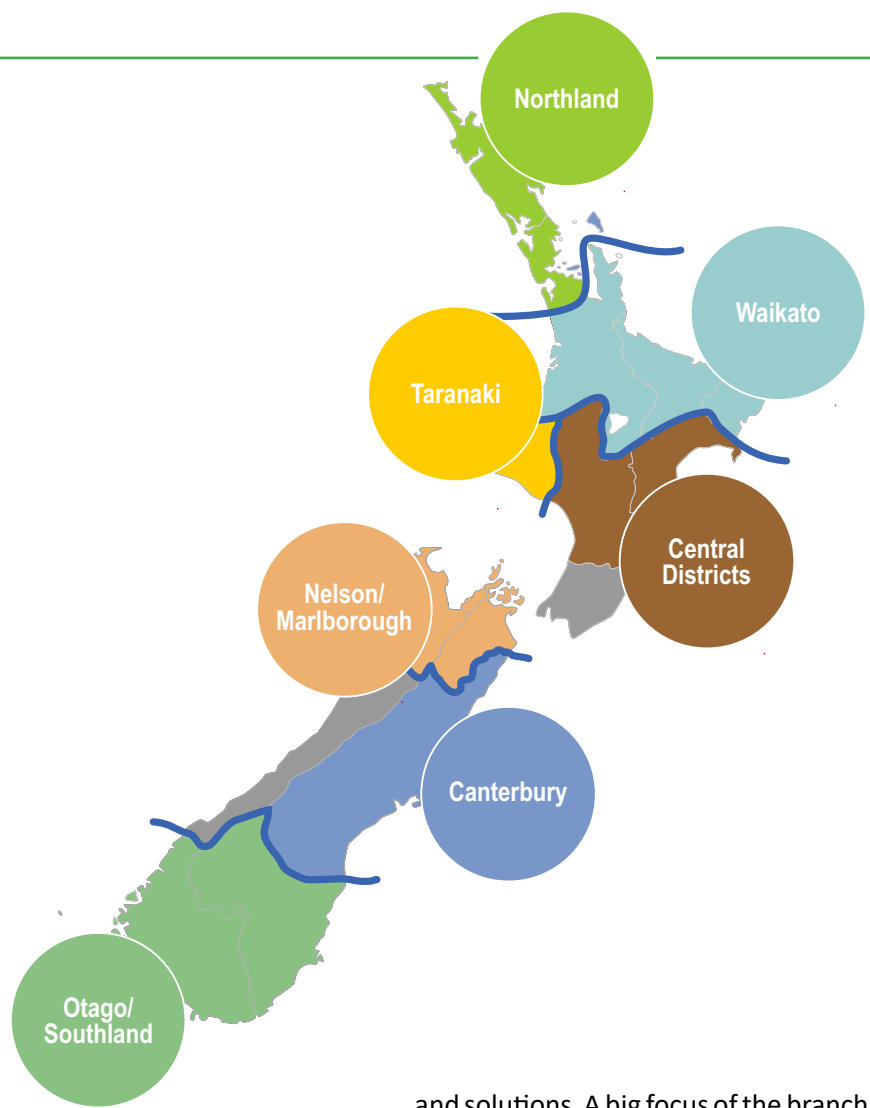
The obvious benefits are the ability to learn from each other, share stories

and solutions. A big focus of the branch is to offer value to members through structured training programmes such as Driver Training (Spreadmark) and First Aid along with the personal development opportunities presented by Ballance Agri-nutrients each year.

In addition, we receive updates and inputs from our Associate members to keep us abreast of any technology improvements. These also assist in addressing issues that members may be experiencing. In general, it is all about like-minded business people getting together.

#### How often do you meet?

We plan to meet quarterly (four times per year) plus the Annual NZGFA Conference. Location of meetings can be challenging but we have focused on a central location, such as Te Awamutu. This does, however, make it challenging for the Taupo/southern members. We have a small “executive group” which will talk on matters of urgency when required. At each meeting members enjoy a beer or two





and some stay for a dinner which is also supported by Associate member businesses.

Training days also offer an opportunity to meet up. We hold our AGM in May prior to the annual conference.

### What is the best way to join up?

The easiest way is to download the required form from the NZGFA website:

[www.nzgfa.co.nz](http://www.nzgfa.co.nz)

The other way is to contact the Chairperson or Secretary of the branch who will guide you through the process.

### When is the next meeting?

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 4th December. The venue is to be confirmed.

### Contacts:

**Graeme Martin:**

[graemem@wealleans.co.nz](mailto:graemem@wealleans.co.nz)

**Keith McGuire:**

[keith@trackit.co.nz](mailto:keith@trackit.co.nz)

### Waikato Branch News:

Spring has definitely sprung and like all years no two years are ever the same. In reflection, this past year has been one of many challenges - covid, a warm winter, the general election - each one with a different outcome and impact. But thinking about the here and now, it is fair to say that it's pretty busy right across the region.

The horticulture sector is still red hot with good returns for kiwifruit and avocados and land being converted to

canopy crops from dairy country in the Bay of Plenty.

The calving season in the region was kind with good weather, warm conditions and sporadic rains. The region is still dry but looking good at this stage.

Looking ahead, we will see an increase in maize planting this season so the pressure will be on operators to get the required applications completed before the planter arrives. The unknown is what it will be like in January with NIWA predicting warmer than average temperatures. The additional supplementary feed crops could be very valuable at that time.

In general farmers are buoyant and we are seeing an increasing awareness around the freshwater policy implications and the Healthy River Plan Change 1.

Please stay safe – being busy is good but being safe is better!

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## Meet Matthew

**Matthew Blomfield, this year's winner of the Ravensdown sponsored NZGFA Young Achiever's Award, tells us why nutrient spreading suits him down to the ground**

In an industry where the average age is typically hovering on the wrong side of 50, the first thing that strikes you about Matthew is his youth. At just 21 years old, Matthew is one of the youngest spreader truck operators in New Zealand and by far the youngest NZGFA member to start their Spreadmark accreditation journey.

The next thing you notice about Matthew is his confidence and enthusiasm. Well-spoken and articulate, Matthew is a clear communicator. His relaxed and friendly approach allows conversation to flow naturally. And it's during this

easy exchange of dialogue with him that you learn just how committed to agriculture he is.

Farming is firmly in Matthew's blood, having grown up on a sheep and beef farm, which later converted to dairy, in Southland's Opio with parents Karen and Michael, younger brother Lachlan and fellow triplets Hamish and Charlotte. It was no wonder that when it came time to leave school after completing his NCEA Level 3, Matthew knew that he wanted to do something outdoorsy. While he wasn't completely sure which direction to take, he did know that if he could combine his love of machinery with farming, he'd be on his way to his dream job.

As Matthew was mulling over where to head, an opportunity arose at Transport Services Southland Ltd. The company needed extra resource in the ground spreading tranche of the

business and, mindful of the average age of their own workforce, decided to bring on board a trainee rather than seek an experienced operator. The position was offered to Matthew and from that moment, Matthew knew that nutrient spreading promised a fulfilling career.

"This opportunity combined everything I love – the outdoors, mechanics and farming – so I jumped at it. Straight away I felt so comfortable with the machinery. I enjoyed handling the large vehicles, getting to grips with the technology and the sense of purpose that this job brings.

"I also couldn't believe some of the scenery I was getting to see. I've grown up in the countryside but this job has taken me well off the beaten track and across some spectacular landscapes. The views take my breathe away and I can't imagine getting tired of them."



Matthew says he feels good knowing that he is contributing to the food production industry and that he takes equal care on every job he does. He explains that he has utmost respect for the land and his aim is to enhance it, not harm it.

In his work, he is both diligent and thorough. He understands the importance of placing nutrients only where they are needed and strives to do the best application he can, every time.

"The work we do is so important. It is the first step in the food production chain. It matters to me to get this absolutely right so that my customers have the best chance of producing the best feed or crops from the get-go."

Nutrient spreading is often perceived as a solitary type of work, where operators often spend all day, or several days, out in the paddocks on their own. This potential for

isolation is augmented by increasingly sophisticated and accurate in-cab technology, which lessens the need for face to face communication. Matthew recognises that being on your own is just part of the job, but being a people person, he makes sure that he makes connections whenever he can.


"I make a point of stopping and having a yarn with anyone I see. It's really important to make the effort. Not just for customer-relations but also for yourself. If you've been out there on your own for a while, it's good to touch base with people again. And, although, we have all the hazards and climatic conditions on our tablets, it's always good just to double check what the ground's like and what you might need to watch out for."

Matthew also uses his people skills to talk to students about the benefits of entering the nutrient spreading profession. He has been to career days and events where he has explained

to Year 12 and 13s that spreading can be a young man's game too. "It's really good to be able to show school leavers that young people work in the industry and I can usually get a rapport going because I was in their shoes not so long ago. Seeing me beside the spreader truck usually resonates with them and gets them thinking that this kind of job could be an option for them too.

"I would really love to encourage more and more young people into the profession. Yes, the summer months are flat out busy which means there's not much time for socialising but the rest of the year is pretty steady, the pay is good, there's lots to learn and lots of responsibility. In addition, it is just so rewarding to think that the contribution we are making to primary industry is essential.


I really feel proud that I am playing such a significant part in the New Zealand food story."



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### The great sales tax rebate scheme

Ken Bell takes a look at a money-back programme for spreader trucks that was designed to upgrade the nation's fleet of spreaders and ran successfully for 20 years.



Salesmen used the scheme as a selling point when highway trucks such as this Nissan CK10 were sold. (CVC photo)

During the 1960s and through until the mid 80s the purchase of a vehicle deemed to be used for spreading fertiliser, spraying weeds or of use solely in the road construction industry was able to be bought new and have the 30% sales tax already paid refunded. The condition being that the spreader bin or spraying gear was not removed for three years.

The concept behind this scheme was that the nation's rural fleet of fertiliser spreaders and weed sprayers was

starting to age and become unreliable. Prior to this scheme, most vehicles used in these areas had formerly been road trucks and were usually past their best. Some were old ex-military vehicles which were built too lightly and certainly beyond their prime. This initiative was set up to upgrade the

national fleet of spreaders and weed spray equipment and improve their reliability and efficiency and so further help to improve the development and productivity of rural New Zealand.

Rural transport operators cashed in on the scheme and truck salesmen used it as a lever in their sales pitches. It was not uncommon for highway trucks to be bought and fitted with a spreader bin only to be parked up until their three year term was up and then pressed into service in "normal" work. One operator was even known to park them up and after the three year period, sell them off as a new (used) vehicle, still under warranty, at the market value and thus make 30% of the truck's value without turning a wheel – clever accounting.

Very often these new trucks were 6x4 and sometimes 8x4 cab and chassis and when fitted with a spreader bin were fairly impractical to use for all spreading work due to their size and weight, particularly when marginal soft or steep ground limited their use.

However, many were used to cart lime and super, sow what they could and transfer, via all types of elevator

Although never designed as an "offroader" this Mack R model performed remarkably well despite the low ground clearance of its front axle. This was the fourth truck that this spreader bin had been on. (G Slack photo)



Many farmers set up their own spreaders. This 8x4 unit towed a three axle trailer and carted thousands of tonnes of lime which it spread where it could and dumped the rest. (D Dickie photo)





systems, their precious cargoes on to smaller 4x4 vehicles for application to marginal country. An advantage of having the bigger, higher horsepower trucks in work meant that they were capable of towing automatic trailers efficiently and safely. The bigger spreaders were also used often to cart fertiliser to airstrip bins for aerial application.

If an operator wanted to remove the spreader bin or spraying rig and put the truck into different use then they were required to pay back the sales tax at a pro rata rate of the amount of time not used of the three year tax period. This often happened when a tractor unit or tipper was needed and a replacement not readily available or the urgency of the situation overruled the necessity to save money over a longer period.

This rule was sometimes bent a little to accommodate an urgent peak time of the year when there was maybe a spike in livestock movements and the spreader would temporarily become a stock truck for a short time, a practise that legally was quite a gamble. Customs and Excise inspectors would inspect and sign off the spreader bins being permanently attached to the chassis and would sometimes carry out random inspections.

The overall structure of the scheme was used by farmers to purchase capital equipment of a better quality than they would normally buy. To this day there are still plenty of spreader bins and spray gear taking up space in sheds that have either done very little work or after a few years of being used as deck mounted units have been parked up. Often the reason behind this has been the realisation by farmers that it is more economical to use contractors and carriers to accurately and efficiently place their fertiliser or weed spray for them.

The scheme did work well overall in practice with mostly genuine cases. In these cases it opened up the budget a little more for operators and, in effect, the rebate received paid for setting up bodywork, painting and signwriting.

This meant that the drivers of the



Inventive and ingenious contraptions transferred lime and super on to other spreaders or on to stockpiles. (K Bell collection)

spreaders would very often get to operate a new truck every three years while their old ones were passed on as “hand me downs” to other tasks within the fleets. The truck manufacturers visiting from overseas could often not fathom the Kiwis logic in running trucks designed for highway use across paddocks and would often question the warranty extent, particularly with

regard to chassis flex, suspension longevity and air filtration quality.

The scheme was abandoned by the Lange government due to changing tax policies but only after hundreds of trucks and 4x4 farm vehicles had been purchased and set up to operate either commercially or as farm owned application vehicles.

The scheme was introduced to improve the national fleet of spreaders which were typically older and ex military trucks. (K Bell collection)



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\*Source: Black, A.S, Sherlock, R.R. and Smith, N.P. 1987. Effect of timing of simulated rainfall on ammonia volatilisation from urea, applied to soil of varying moisture content. J. Soil Sci., 38: 679-687

  
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## Helping us to help you

By Melanie Dingle, NZGFA Executive Office

As an industry we cannot stand alone. We rely on fertiliser companies, vehicle and machinery suppliers, mechanics, engineers and training providers to name a few. Maintaining working relationships with those we rely on daily is not only beneficial but necessary. Two of our key industry partners are Ravensdown and Ballance Agri-nutrients, with the vast majority of our members interacting with them regularly throughout the year.

Both Ravensdown and Ballance work hard to provide quality product and customer service. However, as we know, not everything goes right all of the time. Earlier this year, Ravensdown and Ballance provided the NZGFA with specific email addresses that could be used by members to notify them of fertiliser quality issues, and enabling them to respond to any problems. Upon hearing feedback from our branches, we realised there were other areas where our members encountered problems such as waiting times, blends not being mixed properly and health and safety concerns at some of the stores.

Often these issues were resolved at a store or regional level – which is great. However, this means there is potentially no overview of recurring issues, problems or patterns that occur right across the country.

After consideration, the NZGFA, Ravensdown and Ballance have worked together to set up a process that will allow NZGFA members to provide feedback – both good and bad. While the reporting process remains simple (essentially via email), the value comes from having all NZGFA member feedback captured at a single point.

Fertiliser suppliers will be responsible for responding to any individual concerns received. However, reviewing issues will be a joint



The success of the ground spreading industry relies on team effort

process between NZGFA and fertiliser suppliers. This will enable recurring or ongoing issues to be identified and longer-term solutions to be discussed and implemented.

### What you need to do

When you would like to provide feedback about a service provided by either Ravensdown or Ballance (e.g. about product quality, customer service, health and safety), please email the relevant addresses below, and also cc the email to Melanie Dingle.

#### Ravensdown:

[customer\\_centre@ravensdown.co.nz](mailto:customer_centre@ravensdown.co.nz)

#### Ballance:

[spreading@ballance.co.nz](mailto:spreading@ballance.co.nz)

#### CC NZGFA:

[melanie@nzgfa.co.nz](mailto:melanie@nzgfa.co.nz)

encourage you to try to do so as soon as you can. Even if you have spoken to the store or regional representative you should still email so the issue can be captured and recorded, as it may be part of a bigger picture.

### What information to include

It is really useful if you provide as much detail as you can along with any photos, if relevant. If you've had an issue with waiting times, please provide dates and times in addition to any copies of paperwork, if you have them. In some instances, photos would be a big help, for example, where blends have not been well mixed.

The success of this new notification process will rely on all NZGFA members providing feedback to the relevant fertiliser company plus to Melanie at the NZGFA. If you make it the norm to cc Melanie into your email communication to either Ballance or Ravensdown, then we have a great chance of being able to evaluate the issues and see each one in context of what's going on around the country.

Let's give it a try and help us to help you.

### When you need to do it

While we appreciate you may be busy and it may not always be convenient to email feedback straight away, we

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## The costly consequences of terminating an employee incorrectly

By Claire Arneson, HR Adviser, Safe Business Solutions



An allegedly difficult employee is set to receive \$31,750 after his employment was terminated without any opportunity provided to rectify his behaviour. During September 2020, the Employment Relations Authority in Christchurch ordered Insight NZ to pay former employee, Todd Longson, \$15,000 for unjustified dismissal as well as \$16,750 for three months of lost wages.

In the *Insight vs Longson* case, the employee was alleged to have yelled at a colleague and was then summoned to a disciplinary meeting.

When the disciplinary meeting occurred, employee behaviour from the past was raised, in addition to the incident where he supposedly raised his voice with a colleague. Three days after the meeting, Longson was officially dismissed, giving him no opportunity to rectify his supposedly “bad” behaviour. This termination was viewed as unfair by the Authority and this contributed to the amount awarded to the employee.

Employers should take heed that this

case highlights an emerging trend in New Zealand towards larger financial awards for employees who haven’t been treated in accordance with current employment legislation.

It is now a common outcome for an employee to be awarded circa \$10-15,000 in compensation for ‘hurt and humiliation’, which is often in addition to any lost wage claims.

The economic environment we are currently living in is partly to blame. There is an emerging trend that employees whose roles have been made redundant or who have been terminated are faced with increasingly bleak job prospects and sometimes consider “getting what they can” out of their last employer, as it might be a while before they find their next job.

Employers who have not followed a clear and legal process are especially at risk of being hauled into mediation to explain their actions and, where their justification falls short, they may find themselves ordered to make significant pay-outs to former

employees.

There are many reasons employers fail to carry out employee terminations to the letter of the law. Often, there are financial or time pressures within the business that drive an employer to expedite a redundancy termination situation. In other cases, the employment relationship has broken down over a period of time, and after the “last straw” the employer simply wants the “problem” employee removed immediately.

Other employers find some employee behaviours so offensive they terminate for serious misconduct where that conduct would have been viewed by an outsider as minor in nature, as was the case in the *Insight vs. Longson* case mentioned above.

Employers can mitigate risk to their business by seeking expert advice, using best practice, and adhering to their own policies and employment documents when commencing a process to terminate an employee.

Safe Business Solutions Ltd (SBS) is often called in to help when employers struggle in this area.

We often start by explaining that we will need to follow the process that is laid out in the employment agreements and company policies, and where those are silent or incomplete, we would be limited in what actions we can take.

This can come as an unwelcome surprise to the employer trying to terminate an employee who has tested positive for drugs but doesn’t have a drug and alcohol policy, for example.

As brilliant businessman, Warren Buffet, once said, *“It’s good to learn from your mistakes. It’s better to learn from other people’s mistakes”*.

Learn from the mistakes made by Insight NZ in this case and save yourself time, money and reputational damage.

### Take your time

By Grant Anderson, NZGFA Health & Safety Representative

With current weather conditions throughout the country posing another potentially difficult time for spreader operators, one thing we need to stress is that you should only spread 'if it is absolutely safe to do so'.

While there will be pressure to get the fertiliser on, the job must wait if there is any question or concern about doing it safely. Similar seasons to what we are experiencing have seen tragic outcomes when we have tried to spread when, in hindsight, it should have been left until later.

In the deep south, we've experienced three years in a row now where the weather hasn't treated us well. We understand how unfavourable conditions can cause the work to build up but we can't let ourselves feel the pressure of this, especially if it means

compromising our safety. Please, don't rush to get the work done. Instead, take your time to assess each job properly, look at the environment, the climatic and the forecast. And talk to your customer to explain your assessment.

### Wear your seatbelt

Another safety consideration is to wear your seatbelt or lap belt if you are off road. Seatbelts save lives. We know from data collected from past

incidents that not wearing a seatbelt has played its part in increasing the risk of injury - minor and major.

### Vehicle check reminder

With summer almost here, it's time to do your pre-start vehicle checks. It is crucial that you do this and check for anything untoward, especially bird nests.

As we head into the dry months, we do not want to see any fires in trucks or loaders.



# ATTENTION



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### Stay safe with sulphur

We have recently heard of an incident which involved fertiliser containing fine elemental sulphur coming into contact with someone's eyes. When working with hazardous substances, precaution and accident prevention should be top of mind - always. Importantly, there should also be strict procedures in place to ensure that safety comes first - every time.

Research and knowledge should form part of any preventative approach. With hazardous substances this should include an understanding of

the characteristics of the product. Sulphur, for example, is a flammable substance in both its solid and liquid states. The dust too is characterised by a very low ignition point compared to other combustible dusts, and dust clouds are readily ignited by weak frictional sparks. Dry fine sulphur dust has the highest risk of unintentional fire or explosion.

Knowing this, anyone loading sulphur would understand the need to take care that the front-end loaders, which are generally made from hardened alloy steels, do not come into contact with concrete and produce sparks as this will ignite the sulphur.

If a fire does start, the best way to extinguish it is with foam. Fortunately sulphur fires are quite slow moving but they are difficult to see because the flame tends to be weak. Ignition can be detected, however, if there are traces of dark brown, red or black viscous puddles.

When sulphur burns in the atmosphere it creates Sulphur Dioxide. In certain concentrations, Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) can irritate the eyes, nose, throat and lungs. In this event, anyone suffering from inhalation should be moved into fresh air immediately. Where eyes are irritated, rinse with warm water for 15 minutes. Follow up with medical attention as soon as possible, particularly if irritation persists.

Sulphur can also cause irritation to the skin. This means personal protection equipment (PPE) must be worn when working with the substance and should include gloves, safety goggles with side shields, overalls, face masks and barrier cream.

If sulphur does come into contact with the skin, flush the area in flowing lukewarm water for around five minutes. Soap can be used, if available. If irritation doesn't subside, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

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## Spreading risk lower with safety focus

FARM FERTILISER SPREADERS ARE ONE OF THE MOST VALUED CONTRACTORS VISITING FARMS, THEIR SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT DELIVERING TIMELY LOADS WITH PRECISION AND PROOF OF PLACEMENT TECHNOLOGY IS HELPING FARMERS OPTIMISE THEIR FERTILISER SPEND, AND COMPLY WITH TIGHTER RULES AROUND NUTRIENT LOSSES.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

But ground spreading is also one of the riskier areas of rural contracting, and in recent years the New Zealand Groundspreading Association has pushed hard to lift the standards and expectations around training, risk assessment and attitudes in the sector.

Grant Anderson is the Otago-Southland delegate and vice president of the New Zealand Groundspread Fertilisers Association (NZGFA). He has also been health and safety officer for the past two years. With 20 years in the ground-spreading sector, he completes a busy CV as dispatch manager for HWR's Western Southland Richardson Group fertiliser division.

As the association's inaugural health and safety officer Grant has been responsible for overseeing several initiatives aimed at ensuring the association's members and staff get home safely every night.

This has included the Spotlight incident reporting app as a transparent and constructive tool for recording and learning from industry incidents.

"It means members can invite me to view their incident report, which everyone has to do anyway. Spotlight means it is possible to see all incidents, and get a sense of what if any trends are coming through. Data can be collated, and we can look at how these incidents could be avoided in the future." While only relatively new, he is encouraged by the member uptake for the app to date.

As a new generation of younger drivers come into the industry, technology is not only making their job more precise, it is also helping them be more spatially aware of the varied risks that come with every property they visit in the course of the job.

"TracMap would be accounting for about 80% of the proof of placement technology used by members now. It sends out a text to the farmer when the spreader is on the farm.

"But it also provides a means to highlight any risk areas on the farm, thanks to having the farm map loaded into it."

More recent upgrades to the technology enable spreading contractors to add in any new risks or hazards they may come across in the course of their spread on the property. "It could be that a spring or sink hole has opened up the farmer was not aware of, and it's now possible to mark that in yourself from your cab."

As an industry group there has also been more focus on ensuring the next generation of drivers are better trained. Training at Grant's business is staged over an eight week period, and this is becoming more typical for businesses keen to attract a more safety conscious generation to their ranks.

Training includes modules on risk mitigation, hazard awareness and actions in an incident. As part of the industry's Spreadmark accreditation criteria, all ground spreaders now have to undertake approved training. A NZGFA safety manual outlines approaches to risk identification and management and includes sections on fatigue, distractions and stress.

Last year was also the inaugural year for the NZGFA awards, with one of the four categories being for health and safety. Graeme Martin is also on the NZGFA council as its Waikato rep, and has a strong background in industry safety.

He worked closely with the NZ Agricultural Aviation Association in helping establish safer operating environments for aerial topdressing and implementing its "AirCare" programme. The programme helped turn around a risky flying environment and saw it receive the Richard Pearse Trophy for Innovative Excellence in 2014 from the aviation industry.

He says NZGFA is also working toward achieving similar standards on the ground today and NZGFA's Spreadmark accreditation system is modelled closely off AirCare's approach to risk management.

Before the aerial initiative kicked off farmer-topdresser relations often lacked communication about hazards and issues, and this has since improved significantly.

Similarly, farmer's communication with ground-spreaders is now more professional and risk-aware. "This is in part thanks to the changes in ownership we have seen, with more corporate style farm ownership meaning there is a need for systems to be put in place to ensure safety and accountability," he says.

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### Minimum vehicle standards for fertiliser stores

Ant Boyles, National Logistics Manager, Ravensdown  
Bruce Taplin, Safety Health Environmental Quality Manager, Ballance



New minimum vehicle standards will apply to all vehicles entering Ravensdown and Ballance sites for delivery and collection of products

Health, safety, and environmental management are often seen as areas where the co-operatives can lead and promote safer workplaces for all within our industry. Over the course of the last 18 months, Ravensdown and Ballance have been reviewing site safety and environmental risks, specifically those related to people and vehicle movements on our sites, along with product handling.

The review was prompted by serious harm injuries and significant near-miss incidents experienced by both co-operatives. These involved contracted carriers, spreader operators and shareholders. Given the large crossover of commercial operators and customers calling on both co-operatives, it makes sense for us to

collaborate on what has typically been a very difficult area to manage - our vehicle standards. Collectively, our vision is for a workplace where both site visitors and employees are kept safe from harm. We are also committed to improving environmental outcomes, particularly around the management of spillage and run-off events.

### Vehicle safety

There are a number of interpretations around what constitutes a suitable, safe-to-load vehicle. However, the following points provide a guideline:

- Any vehicle that allows a load to be safely carried to its intended destination without failing.
- The vehicle must allow the product to be secured and covered safely.

- The vehicle will not cause our products to impact the environment in any way.

In our view, people who visit our sites and interact with our employees are part of our working family, and we need to keep them safe wherever they are working, not just while they're visiting our sites. So Ravensdown and Ballance will jointly launch this initiative as a standard for operators across all fertiliser works, stores and quarry sites.

### What will this mean on-site?

To that end we will commence a roll-out of common minimum vehicle standards. These will apply to all vehicles entering our sites for delivery and collection of products. The standards will apply to both commercial operators and shareholders.

Over the coming months you will be provided with specific details of what the standards are. We will be looking at a soft rollout over a number of months, and we would appreciate your feedback and ideas during this time to assist in refining the standards. We have already made some changes based on feedback received from commercial operators, the NZGFA and the Road Transport Forum.

Information will be available at all our despatch points and we will send out reminders in the lead up to implementation. We want to ensure that everyone is aware of the expectations over this period - in advance of the standards coming into force.

For most of you, it will mean little to no change on how you currently operate. For those where a change is expected, please have a chat to us about what this means for you, and we can jointly discuss potential alternatives. So, keep an eye out for further information coming your way soon. For now, all we ask is that you keep yourselves and those around you safe during this busy period.

### Spring fever

By Ant Boyles, National Logistics Manager, Ravensdown

It certainly feels like we're in the middle of Spring, with most regions taking advantage of good early ground conditions. We're hopeful those regions experiencing unseasonably dry conditions get the rainfall they desperately need soon. For this update we'd like to fill you in on some of the initiatives underway that may directly impact your business.

#### HawkEye:

HawkEye user numbers continue to grow. Integration with TracMap controllers and being able to order multi-rate spreading in a single spread order is making life much easier for spreading contractors and farmers alike. Ravensdown Joint Venture and TracMap-fitted contractors now all receive digital spread-files for spread controller guidance. For further information please contact our team at [support@hawkeye.farm](mailto:support@hawkeye.farm)

#### Urea Coatings:

With the assistance of Spread Test NZ Ltd and Spreading North Canterbury, we've completed certified field spreading trials which show that a urease inhibitor coating on urea (N-Protect products) has no impact on spreading performance.

We're continuing our investment in N-Protect manufacture to meet the growing demand, increasing capacity across the network. The Christchurch Works will soon be despatching N-Protect through the Urea Despatch point, which will ease congestion on A Despatch.

#### Infrastructure:

The Christchurch intake replacement is nearing completion, while the Seadown Service Centre redevelopment is continuing, with the screening plant and weighbridge replacement now completed. We expect both projects will have a

positive impact on site efficiency.

Ravensdown and Ballance have been jointly working on site visitor and vehicle standards focusing on health, safety and the environment – please refer to the included article for further information.

These will be introduced over a period of months, and we welcome feedback from you during this period.

In the lead up to Christmas we encourage you to stay safe and to look out for yourselves and others

### Introducing Jonny Reay

By Jeremy Begg, Regional Distribution Manager, Ballance Agri-Nutrients



Jonny Reay, our new National Distribution Manager, joined the team at the start of October. Having worked for a range of primary industries and technology businesses during his career across New Zealand, Europe and Australia, Jonny comes to us from Fonterra. He brings with him a wide range of distribution and supply chain experience, leadership, relationship management and lean experience.

This experience is enhanced by Jonny's well-developed commercial acumen, strategic ability and real empathy for New Zealand's primary sector. He sees the challenge at the heart of any distribution network as the safe

delivery of the products and services to our customers, in the most effective way.

Jonny loves working in teams that care about people and their safety, and are interested in lifting their capability to deliver better outcomes for their customers and our business.

Jonny says, "the opportunity to join the Ballance team, moving closer to the source of what enables our amazing New Zealand agriculture to be so successful at home and abroad is exciting.

"I can't wait to be part of that journey to safely move our products through our distribution network to the soil of New Zealand."

Jonny will be the conduit between Ballance and the NZGFA, as such he is looking forward to meeting as many people as possible, understanding what Ballance does well and what we can do better as a business to help the industry as a whole.

#### In the meantime:

if you have any feedback for Ballance or Jonny please remember the

[spreading@ballance.co.nz](mailto:spreading@ballance.co.nz)

email address is always available.

### Fertmark - the only NZ fertiliser standard

By Philippa Rawlinson, Executive Director, Fertiliser Quality Council

In the recent dispute between Ballance Agri-nutrients vs Quin over the validity of industry standards as applied to their respective fertiliser products, the High Court recognised that Fertmark is the only standard for fertiliser sold in New Zealand.

As fertiliser is a significant expenditure for farmers and growers, this judgement recognises the importance





Fertmark is the only standard for fertiliser sold in New Zealand.

of a clear understanding of the characteristics of the product being purchased.

Established in 1996, Fertmark was set up by farmers for farmers when the government stepped away from regulating and auditing fertiliser. The need to ensure farmers had some form of guarantee that the fertiliser they were purchasing was true to label was strong. The window of opportunity was small and Fertmark was set up with speed – reducing the

risks of leaving the fertiliser market unmonitored for any length of time.

Now in existence for nearly 25 years, Fertmark has been the ambulance at the top of the cliff for the majority of farmers and growers purchasing fertiliser. By using a robust independent auditing system that regularly verifies the declared values of each fertiliser product, farmers and growers can be confident that the fertiliser products aligned with Fertmark are true to the claims.

Fertmark has an established register comprising around 80% of fertiliser products sold in New Zealand. Of course, this still leaves 20% of fertiliser products in use on our soils unverified. This begs the question of whether the farmers and growers using products within this 20% margin know exactly what they are putting on their land.

Perhaps, when any of us come across a customer who isn't using Fertmark approved fertiliser, we should be asking them 'why'?





# ALL GOOD JOURNEYS COME TO AN END, BUT THE ROAD AHEAD IS BRIGHT.

"From when Don first started the business out of the back of his Falcon ute in 1987 to 2020 where Shannon and I have enjoyed operating our 9 locations across New Zealand, we can only look back at what has been achieved in 33 years and feel extremely proud of what our team has accomplished.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our incredible customers for your support over the last 3 decades. Many of you have become friends and these strong relationships are something we have come to value so much.

While the Trucks & Trailers chapter in the New Zealand trucking industry is coming to a close, our same great team will be available for you in the same locations, simply with another logo above the door, and you are always welcome.

If you have any questions about our transition we can be contacted through our 0800 number, otherwise we look forward to seeing you down the road."

Mark & Shannon Wright

