

Farming Mums NZ – The Next Step



Is there a need for an online hub for ‘Farming Mums NZ’?

Will individual industry groups support this initiative?

How will this website, it's creation and content be funded?

Chanelle O'Sullivan | Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme | June 1, 2016

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My kids, for being so understanding with Mum being away at 'meetings' and putting up with what has been very busy and at times, stressful year where every corner has come unpredicted! You guys are so resilient and I'm extremely thankful for that.

To my parents when I told them I was thinking of applying for Kellogg (before telling Dave) and saying 100% yes, go for it. Thanks for helping out Dave and the kids in my absence, for listening to our multiple business ideas each month and talking through them with us as well as being endlessly supportive of me for the past 28 years and of Dave for the past nine.

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To the ladies of Canterbury Rural Women NZ, especially Margaret Chapman, thank you for arranging the funding of Kellogg for me. It would have been very stressful on the finances without you. Margaret and Graham, you've helped in more ways than one this year including housing us on your beautiful farm. I really hope I can do you proud and help Rural Women NZ grow and prosper bigger and better than ever.

To the past, present and future administration team of Farming Mums NZ. Without you, the page would not exist. The amount of times I have wanted to throw it all in, it's because of you that it has survived and gone from strength to strength. Any success this has further, please know that YOU made this happen and you are the ones who deserve the credit for celebrating the great times and getting us through often horrific and upsetting situations with our members, their families and those we have lost. A big thank you to 'Daisy' too. You have some hard situations to deal with at times and always do so with grace and patience. As well as being a friend, you are one of the biggest assets of the group.

Nadine, thanks for using Farming Mums as the basis for your Kellogg report. Your unbiased and genuine position has opened doors, my eyes and those of others. I think you are fabulous and I can't wait to see where we can work together and what comes next.

Thanks to Patrick, Anne and Desley for facilitating and organising such a fantastic programme. You are worth your weight in gold Patrick and I hope you don't ever change your phone number – I have a feeling I'll be needing your wise words for years to come!

Thanks also to the 660 FMNZ Ladies who took part in my survey, your input is what has made this project so valuable!

Thanks team for your support and sacrifices. I promise it will all be worthwhile, just you wait and see!

Foreword



My name is Chanelle O’Sullivan. I was born and raised in suburban Auckland and attended the largest girls high school in New Zealand, Westlake Girls.

After finishing high school, I decided to pursue my interest in agriculture and did a Certificate in Agriculture at the Waikato Institute of Technology. On the 3rd of October 2007, My dog and I commenced the 1,368km drive to a high country station on the shores of Lake Pukaki in the Mackenzie country, 4 days later arriving at the station. Three months in, I realised I wasn’t quite prepared for this. A broken arm on the last day of tailing meant the end of my short shepherding career but as I had met my husband within a month of moving down at the Mackenzie Young Farmers club, I wasn’t going far!

After eighteen months of dairy farming I got a job as a vet nurse and trained on the job in Geraldine at Aorangi Vets, while my husband stock managed a deer property in Timaru until I had Isabelle who is now 4.5 years old.

I now understand why my work path played out as it did and I’m extremely thankful to have the practical level of understanding and experience I received in those few years of uncertainty!

I got engaged to my husband on my 21st birthday, married at 22 and had Izzy at 23.

When Izzy was 1-year-old, we moved 45 minutes away from my husband's family and the vet clinic I had worked at, to Mayfield. There were two local child care facilities. One wouldn't take them until they were 2.5 years old and the other had a 6-month waiting list.

In that first year of motherhood, and I think I speak for many when I say this, life gets turned upside down and you are made to completely question your identity and what is important to you. For me I think it's been the making of me. I got a chance to sit back and think – Who am I? What are my values? What do I believe in? Where to from here?

Farming Mums surfaced in 2013 when I was 24 and living in Mayfield. It was started by a forward-thinking lady called Anna Clark from Dannevirke. Anna started a Facebook 'Page' called Farming Mums NZ. When the page had 150 'likers', she asked if anyone would be interested in taking it over as her daughter had been diagnosed by Type 2 diabetes and needed her full attention.

I took it over and by the time it had 600 likers I realised that a 'page' wasn't the format that was working which led me to change the 'page' format to a 'group' as it is today.

It's still surprising to think that when I left school, I was still relatively clueless to where I wanted to be. I now have a purpose. I now have a passion, a desire to make living rurally, a 'life-making' experience.

Living away from town is NOT a disadvantage but an opportunity to look outside the box and create a life that suits you and your skills and break out of the 9-5.

With the agriculture industry growing and changing rapidly, we need to be able to support the women involved and not let isolation ruin careers, dreams and pursuits of greatness. We are lucky to live in a world where the internet has broken down many barriers.

This is how I have come to where I am now and where I believe the next step begins.

“Build the life you love”

Executive Summary

Two years ago, I had an idea of adding a 'one-stop-shop' website into the brand that is, Farming Mums NZ.

The aim of this study is to determine whether further, specific support and resources are wanted or needed by the Farming Mums NZ community and to initiate a game plan on how to get it started. After Kellogg, I will look at the implementation of my concept and I will surround myself with professionals and advisors who can help me make this happen.

To avoid replication among other organisations, my aim is to create an online platform where each aspect of our industry can be brought together in one place and utilise each of our strengths to create a comprehensive and personalised website with member requested additional content and information not found elsewhere.

To determine whether this would be well received, I formed a 10 part, Survey Monkey questionnaire (Appendix 2). I attached the link into a post in the Farming Mums NZ Facebook Group to get a more accurate view on whether I was looking at the issue from the right angle.

Farming Mums NZ has the social aspect, the forum and the largest numbers giving it a community-feel, meaning great exposure, a dedicated following and a large amount of the 'Next Generation' of farmers, farming mums and rural women.

Other organisations I will be looking to collaborate with include Rural Women NZ, Agri-Womans Development Trust, Young Farmers, Dairy Woman's Network, Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa, Young Rural Ladies, Primary ITO, Regional Community Connectors, AuPair Link, Newcomers Networks, Maori Woman's League, Farmstrong, Fit4Farming, As well as the wider agricultural industry organisations. I.e. Beef + Lamb, Dairy NZ, FAR.

The support and collaboration between these organisations would be the best use of the website and I believe would add value to each of them. Each organisation could give a valuable contribution of resources and information from a different area of the industry and expertise, creating a whole and well-rounded knowledge base. In saying that, having full support industry wide won't determine whether the concept goes ahead.

Nadine Porters Kellogg report from earlier in the year highlighted the need for us to all work together. I agree completely with this point and believe it is the best way forward to form a well-rounded support system for our wider industry rather than each organisation offering separate ideas, overlooking key points or risking replication.

"Who is the voice for rural women? There seems to be confusion among women as to who is representing them. Rural women groups urgently need to co-ordinate and develop a collective strategy in today's environment." Nadine Porter, 2016

The results from the survey were positive and with 660 participants it helped to build confidence around the idea and what was most important to those who will be most likely to benefit. 96% of respondents were on board with the idea.

Having the brand "Farming Mums NZ" or similarly named, along with the large page support and reputation bringing this initiative together, is going to be the best way to engage the largest number

of technologically savvy women. I also see FMNZ as an independent in the middle of these other mentioned groups with no particular industry bias or current monetary influence.

1. Introduction to Farming Mums NZ

1.1 The Background

Farming Mums NZ was launched on Facebook in early 2013. It started as a group to unite likeminded individuals, share experiences, advice and comradery between women living rurally with children.

Since its conception, the group has had continued steady growth, a good reputation, media and industry support and has formed a safe environment for our ladies to ask questions, share photos and come to, in times of need.

The motto of Farming Mums NZ is 'Supporting, Inspiring, Connecting'. This is what the group has been built on and something we refer back to when making decisions for the future of it.

1.2 Current

In the past three and a half years, Farming Mums has twisted and morphed naturally into what it is today with the guidance of an administration team and myself.

By having a level headed, hardworking team of voluntary administrators, an anonymous question option (See Appendix 3) a comprehensive and personalised Code of Conduct (See Appendix 1), a strict 3 strikes policy and a large content and post variation is what makes Farming Mums successful and gives us a worthy point of difference.

Although I have wanted to build this website for the past 2 years, the capital needed to build the site, the extent of the hours and work needed and the concern it may not be as well utilised as I had imagined is what has stalled me up until this point.

Farming Mums NZ, at this stage, has a simple Squarespace website (www.farmingmumsnz.com) which allows us to be contacted via the Farming Mums email address (farmingmumsnz@gmail.com). It has a 'Links' directory and a small tab for information based around Frequently Asked Questions.

After reading Nadine Porters Kellogg report from the January intake 2016 and doing my own surveys and research, my views have changed and my drive is renewed. Nadine surveyed 109 women of which a large portion of those were from the Farming Mums NZ Facebook group. It has since convinced me that this IS something that is needed and with 8200 women sitting and waiting, now is the time to engage the audience and use my influence to strengthen the community, extend that reach and give our rural women every chance to thrive in their environment.

We currently have 50 to 150 women still joining each week as increased media coverage and industry newsletters link to the group. While we are in a high growth stage, I feel it is a perfect time to use that momentum to extend our reach, knowledge and resources.

2. Aims and Objectives

My most significant aim with this project is to be able to help more women, in more ways.

The aim of my concept paper is to establish whether my idea of an interactive Farming Mums NZ website would be utilised and supported by wider industry and whether it can generate an income for support and further development of this project.

I want to know and understand what the most pressing issues are within the community to ensure we roll out the website and its contents by members view of importance.

I want to be able to demonstrate to the wider agricultural industry that this is a 'need' and an extremely valuable resource that would add value to our rural communities. To be able to have direct contact with these women would not just add value to the group, but to the wider industry and businesses. This includes existing women's groups, in particular, Rural Women NZ.

Recognition of a woman's role in her farming business and in agriculture in general, is increasing and has changed remarkably in the past 20 and even 10 years. Many of our members are part time or full time farmers themselves and have an enormous wealth of knowledge and strength to share. I want this to also consider the older women who are perhaps not familiar with Facebook but wish to still have contact and to be able to share their skills and experiences.

As Nadine mentioned in her report, many of these women hold a particular, unutilised skill set. Although these perhaps were not initially agriculture based, many can be adapted. With 50,000 more people needed in New Zealand's agricultural sector by 2025, (Hon. Nathan Guy. 2014) and being that around 86% of women who are living rurally already working outside of the farming business (Nadine Porter. 2016)– we need to be sharing the knowledge from within the industry and using their time and skills wisely. A readymade, flexible and intelligent, farm-smart, kiwi work force!

While that would be a great scenario, if it were to happen, we need to ensure that our women are being fully supported in every aspect. Being emotionally, physically and mentally strong as well as being able to spend time with family and a social life. It's an enormous balancing challenge but for those that are willing, or doing it already – why not?

Many will be working outside of the farm purely as the current on-farm income isn't providing enough for goals of future farm ownership. Are they coping with this added pressure? Do they WANT to work or NEED to work? We must ensure that our women are happy, confident and most importantly, balanced and not feeling guilty for their choices. Can the website help with that?

“With higher expectations than perhaps ever before, dual roles of motherhood, farming and sometimes off farm work, the rural women are susceptible to higher levels of stress and anxiety than perhaps any other time in history.” Nadine Porter 2016

3. Method

A 10 question (Appendix 2) 'Survey Monkey' questionnaire link was published to Farming Mums NZ on the 11th of September with the request that as many members as possible fill it in.

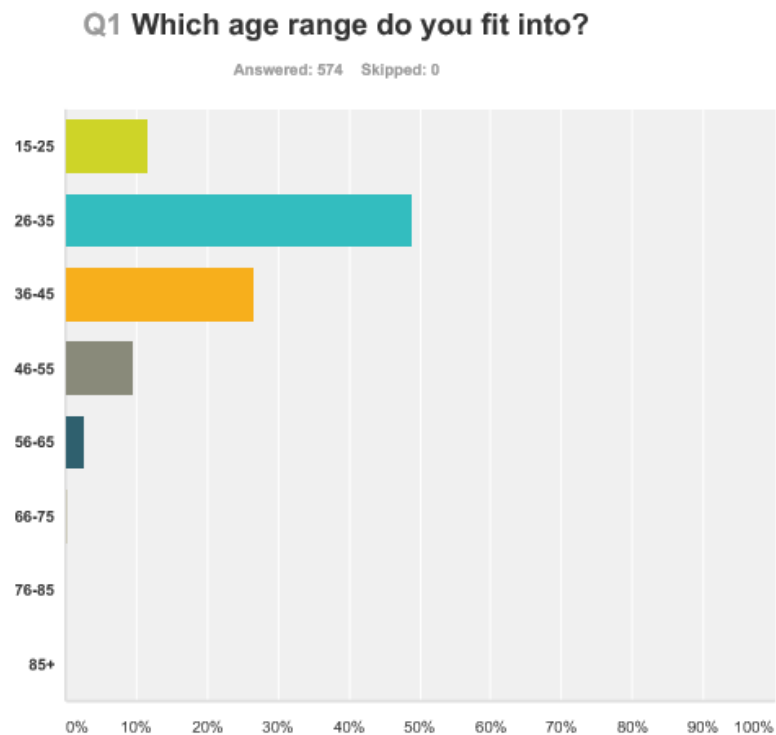
In one post and within 24 hours, 660 women filled out the survey giving a 9.2% uptake of the survey of which I believe has given an accurate representation of the group.

As I was looking to determine the opinion of the members, based on what they know of the group, I didn't survey women outside of it. This may have been a good separate survey to have done to determine general, unbiased views on information accessibility. This is something I may still do in the future should that information be requested.



4. Findings

Figure a



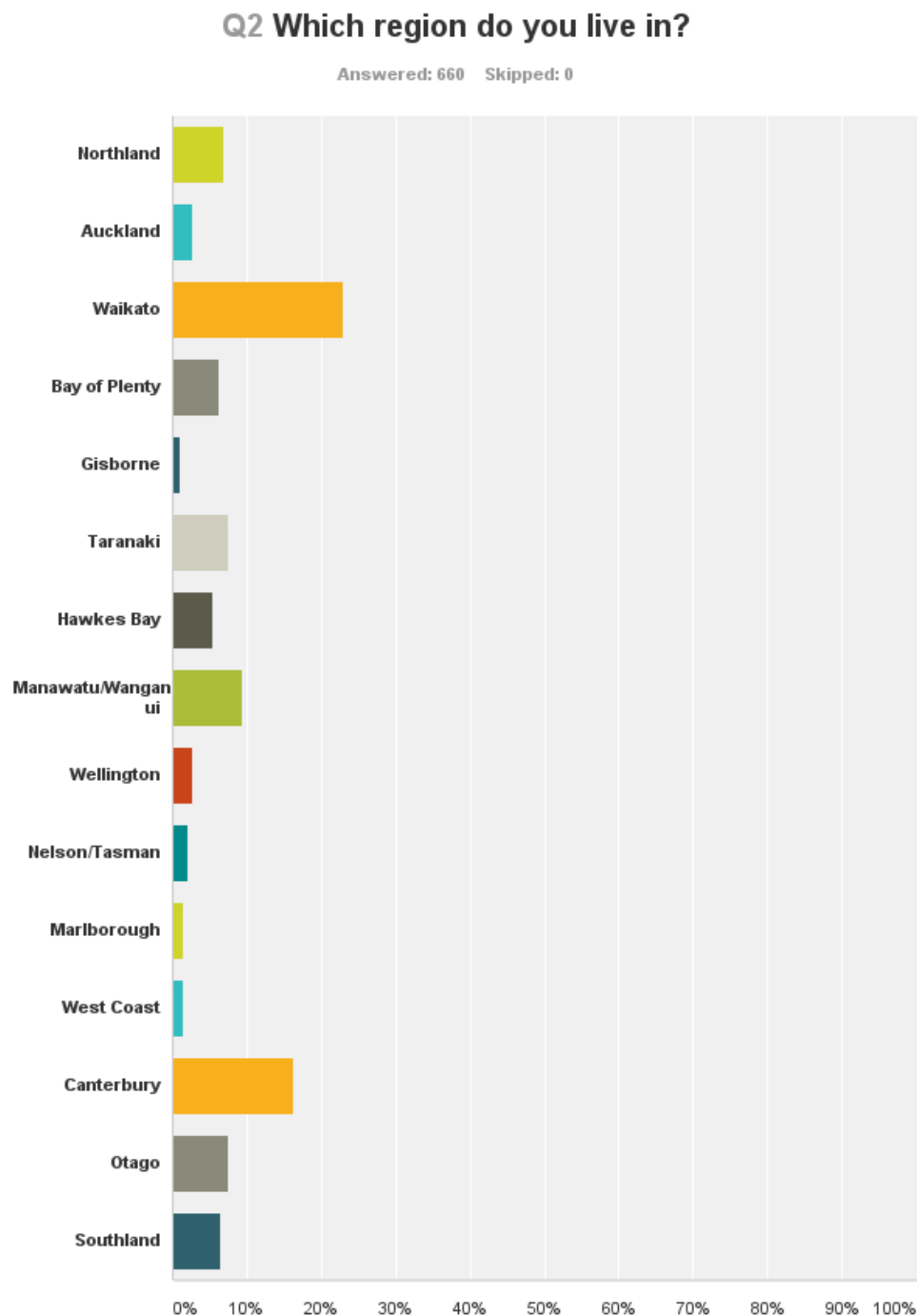
Answer Choices	Responses
15-25	11.67% 67
26-35	48.95% 281
36-45	26.66% 153
46-55	9.58% 55
56-65	2.79% 16
66-75	0.35% 2
76-85	0.00% 0
85+	0.00% 0
Total	574

This is an accurate representation of the range of ages we have within the page and has been a continued pattern from surveys done back in 2014 and 2015.

Our largest age range of 26-35 isn't surprising as the initial thought behind the group was to connect women who had recently left work, had their first child and are now living rurally, often away from friends and family.

The large range of ages is vital to the page's success and the experience each person contributes is invaluable.

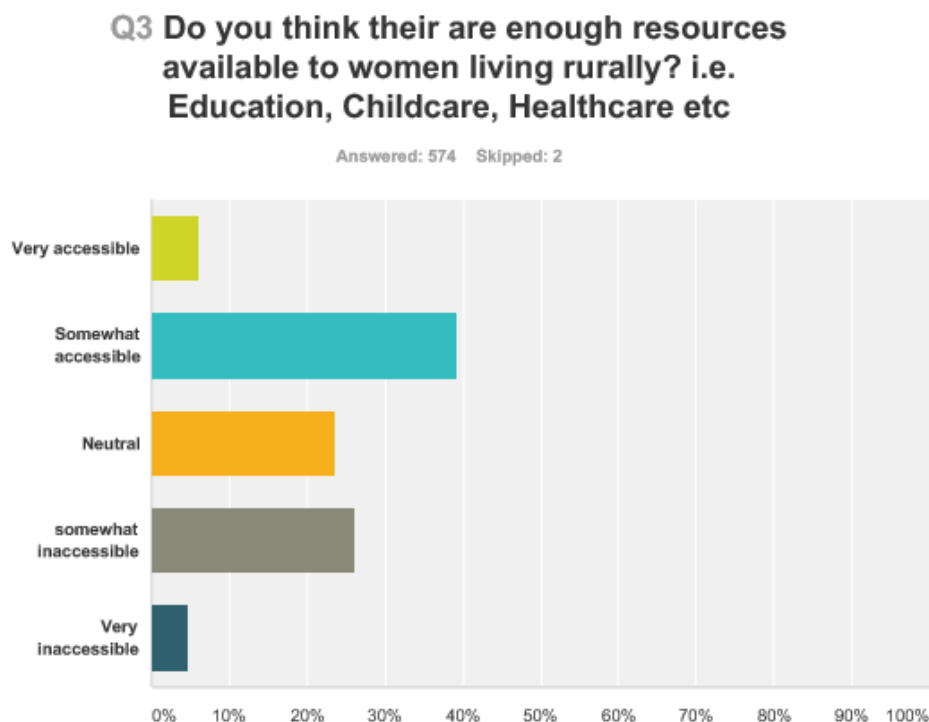
Figure b



Another accurate reflection of a reoccurring pattern representing our largest farming and particularly dairy farming regions.

With dairy farming, often being of transient nature, Farming Mums gives a consistent and reliable community, providing ready-made groups in each region to help make inter-regional transitions easier to cope with. Our regional spread means members can answer questions around schooling options and tap into local knowledge at the click of a button.

Figure c



Reoccurring questions within the page led me to ask this question.

Questions around what courses are available via correspondence have reduced which I believe is due to improvement of knowledge and frequent discussion around Primary ITO and AWDT. I was quietly concerned that the lack of questions around education options could be due to disinterest but you will see question number 7 shed some light on this.

Medical and health related questions are an ongoing battle within the page. People often turn to the group with photos and symptoms to determine what is wrong or what they do next. This is a dangerous area to play in and we have since added a rule into our Code of Conduct addressing this –

8) To ensure the safety of members and their families we have BANNED posts asking for medical advice. In a vast majority of cases it is recommended that you contact Healthline on 0800 611 116. The service is nationally available 24/7, professional and FREE. On our own judgment Admin can delete comments or an entire post on the basis of dangerous or unsuitable advice being offered.

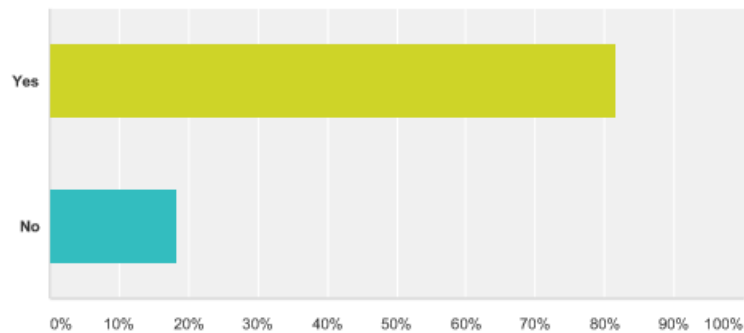
(See Appendix 1. for the full Code of Conduct)

The response on this question shows some indecision and I would suggest this could be improved by the hub I am suggesting and creating a clear and concise portal with additional page-personalised information.

Figure d

Q4 Would you like to further understand farming and/or your farming business?

Answered: 571 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	81.61% 466
No	18.39% 105
Total	571

The majority answer to this question is what I believed and was hoping to discover.

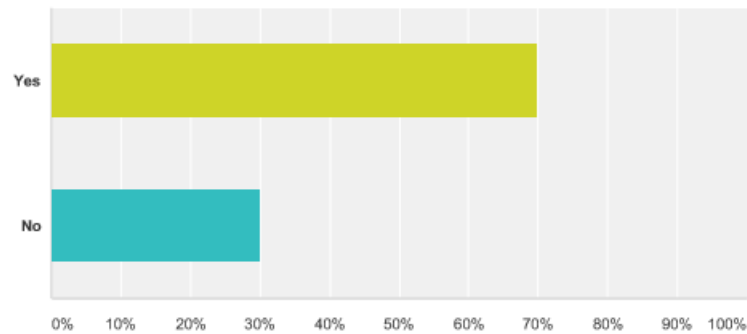
This is a multi-tiered issue. Some of the obstacles I see here include lack of communication of interest between spouses and bosses (Farm Managers or Owners reluctant to get a partner/family involved). I'd love to see more couples talking about the farming operations, rural news items and their goals and aspirations. I understand this won't be of interest to everyone but I hope that those who want to know more, are encouraged and can do so.

Another challenge is education options. Many of these women living rurally, struggle with any childcare let alone flexible childcare for block courses or full days away. Complete online courses do have a place so long as they can see it in action on the farm or in the office and personal drive is there. Cost is also an ongoing issue at the level I am most wanting to impact.

Figure e

Q5 Would you watch, use and participate in vlogs, webinars or live interviews? i.e. Industry leaders, Bank managers, Life coaches, Nutritionists etc

Answered: 568 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	69.89%	397
No	30.11%	171
Total		568

This would be a good way of further interacting with members outside of writing back and forwards and missing information. Like Carrie Green of the Female Entrepreneur Association and Jake Millar from Unfiltered.

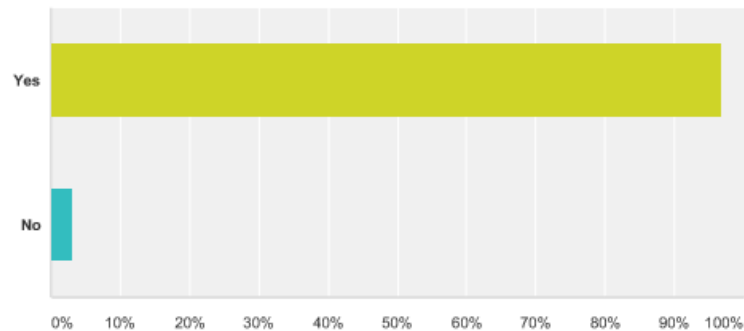
My thoughts behind this idea include interviews with industry professionals based on FMNZ member questions. Question and answer sessions with nutritionists, life coaches, counsellors, health care professionals, veterinarians and personal trainers. The option for webinars on ongoing topics or questions also include nutrition, physical wellness and life coaches.

Vlogs are also an option I would love to see from our members. Around the farm, school runs, pony rides, calving cows, milking, rearing lambs, mustering and what their daily lives involve to help feel connected and help others feel connected. This could be a fun way of getting people outside of their comfort zones, learning new skills, and having some fun while educating others. A new and improved future vision leads me to believe that virtual reality is a viable training options also.

Figure f

Q6 Do you believe Farming Mums NZ would benefit from having online resources, based around common questions and issues from the page? i.e. FAQs, Links, Printables

Answered: 570 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	96.84%	552
No	3.16%	18
Total		570

Farming Mums has regularly asked questions. Here are a few examples to give you an idea.

- How can I treat nits? (NOT Frontline as commonly suggested)
- What is the best dairy roster?
- How can I unbloat my pet lamb?
- What can I make with chicken breasts for dinner? (Recipe Section)
- What age can I give my child vat milk?
- What's the best vacuum cleaner?
- How do I get fly poo off my ceiling?
- What is the ancalf mixing rate?
- When can calves be put onto OAD feeding?
- What is the best type of calf shed bedding?
- Who can I talk to about succession planning before I divorce the inlaws?

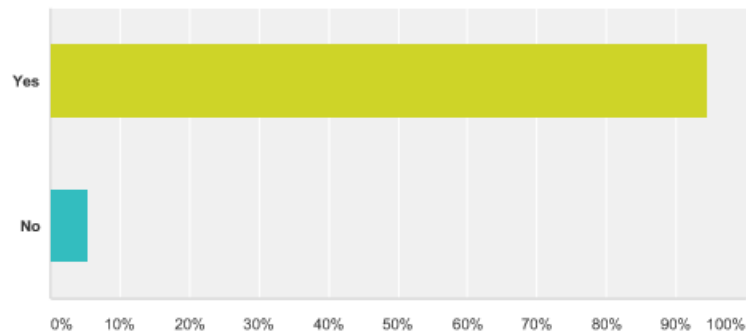
From these, to more serious questions such as how to leave an abusive partner and get out of a dangerous situation. One of our most common topics within the Daisy account (See Appendix 3) is mental health. Questions on antidepressant side effects, where to find a counsellor in a particular region, how to approach their partner who's attitude and mood has changed and asking for other people experiences to help understand a situation.

We also get plenty of anonymous employee/employer issues and requests on where to find more information on employment law and their rights.

Figure g

Q7 If you were given the option of free to cheap online learning from personal subjects to farming and beyond, would this be helpful?

Answered: 569 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	94.55% 538
No	5.45% 31
Total	569

This backs up what I mentioned above with the AWDT and other educational organisations such as Primary ITO.

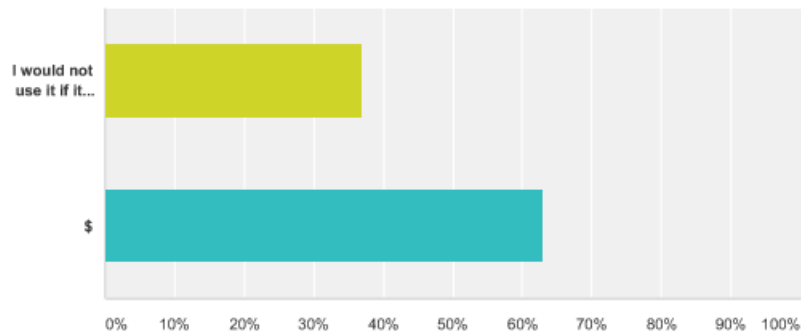
How can we help facilitate and encourage this? With Nathan Guy (2014) telling us the sector is going to need 50,000 more people by 2025 in order to double primary exports – why aren't we utilising and upskilling the women that are already immersed in the industry. Many of these women have been to university and have valuable skills that could be incorporated into the industry if they were better resourced and supported.

I think the potential here to play towards future learning styles and away from traditional methods could give us a strong point of difference and allow us to keep ahead of the masses.

Figure h

Q8 In the event we can't achieve complete funding, How much is the MOST you would be willing to pay for this access annually?

Answered: 556 Skipped: 20



Answer Choices	Responses	
I would not use it if it had any cost associated	37.05%	206
\$	62.95%	350
Total		556

Industry support would be my preferred way of funding this website, its upkeep and ongoing content creation.

A reason for this is that I would like to work with the wider industry in an ongoing sense. With advertising and communication of news, events and educational opportunities as well as the chance for members to interact with industry professionals. Rather than recreating all the content and information of FAQs, education options and more, I would rather directly link members to the specialised content that already exists on each sectors websites, based on the nature of the question. For example, calf rearing information on the DairyNZ website, Stocking Unit and land use information off the Beef + Lamb website, Agri-Kids competition information on the Young Farmers website and an in-depth and 'Everything you'd ever want to know about farming deer' on the Deer Industry's 'Deer Hub'.

Analysis

Building on the findings under each survey question above.

1. Only a few regions have formed groups that meet up outside of the page regularly and I'd love to see that grow and happen in every region. Perhaps this is another aspect where Rural Women could work with us as they have long term regional areas that meet regularly and have for a long time. There is a website called 'Meetup' (www.meetup.com) that could be integrated into the website by area and could be something to investigate further.
2. Lack of childcare options is often an area specific issue, but we do hear about how far away childcare options are, daily driving times and the internal battle around hiring an Au Pair to live with the family to help balance out the families work commitments. With dairying, often this is the most suitable option due to seasonal differences and early mornings. This is where Farming Mums could work directly with Au Pair agencies. After-school childcare options is another area of concern as Nadine highlighted and something that rural schools especially could benefit from.
3. Agri-Woman's Development Trust has a course called "Understanding your farming business" which I have heard fantastic reports on. It is also a free course. An issue here still is childcare but I do believe if you want something enough, you can make it happen. It would be great to be able to take and promote this course wider.

I believe AWDT is a great organisation with many levels of training to offer including personal development, but they need more funding. To be able to roll this out on a larger level, covering more regions, more often and offering a range of courses for each age, stage and demographic would be a fantastic outcome should they wish to grow their resources and reach.

4. I would love to offer a range of courses to our women via AWDT and Primary ITO, over the entire spread of the country each year. Low to no costs associated would be ideal, but I would at least like to see no cost on an entry level personal development and self-confidence building course (Last year in Northland there was a course designed by Lindy Nelson on behalf of Rural Women called 'Reveal' that may be appropriate here).

A big issue here will be connectivity to stream this. I live in an area where we have ADSL that's bounced off the neighbours woolshed. The buffering time alone means I am less likely to watch videos online than I did when I had satellite broadband. With reliable internet to a rural area and often satellite set up, cost becomes an issue. This is another large topic on its own that needs to be addressed for farmers to keep up with the rest of the developed world. I would love to chat further with Vodafone or another nationwide telecommunications company about how we can help or work with them to improve this.

5. I would like to see written blogs as well as video blogs (vlogs). For example, a member writes each day for a week about experiences, challenges and rewards amongst their region and sector. Some may continue this on into their own personal blogs too. An international spin on this would be an option further down the track.

6. While it would be foolish to keep wanting something for nothing, how can we make this affordable and desirable? How can we help the 539 women shown here to be wanting more, to upskill and become an increasingly valuable part of the farming business or community? They've told us they want it. That's a fantastic start.

Is there a way we can offer scholarships, training incentives or discounts to make it easier?

7. Although some of these women are often willing to work – how do we ensure they aren't put under excess pressure and that the support systems are in place for the increased study or work involvement?
8. The other reason I would like to work with industry is because the group of women I want to be able to work with, impact and upskill the most is those that would otherwise perhaps be unable to afford a monthly or yearly fee for membership.

At the same time – Will paying a membership fee encourage participation and give the website a greater value therefore more likely to be utilised?

9. The question in Figure h, was followed with the option to comment further on how much you would be willing to pay for the resource. The general response was that it would depend on the extent of what was provided and what educational resources were available. For an annual fee, everything from \$30 to \$500 was suggested.

Discussion

Based on the survey results above as well as some existing industry knowledge, I have some questions and thoughts to work through further as well as new revelations if we choose to work with other organisations.

The concept of an online, website based Farming Mums NZ hub would be easier to take further with the support and utilisation of the skills of existing organisations. Some I have mentioned above include:

- Rural Women NZ. RWNZ is a 91-year-old organisation and the original backbone of our rural communities. Rural Women has one of the most valuable sources of information and it's in the heads of their 2,500 members. The average age of members is 65+ but rather than seeing this as detrimental, I see it as a strength. Some of these women have been on farm for 70+ years and have survived through the toughest economic climates, environmental disasters and without the modern conveniences of the 21st century. How can we capture this knowledge, experience, their wise words and resilience? How can we change the way we look at these women and understand that they have been there, survived and thrived? How can we ensure the organisation continues and the higher level government policy side stays – with increased support?
- Agri-Womans Development Trust. AWDT, headed by Lindy Nelson is a fantastic organisation. They offer courses to women to encourage leadership from home level and beyond. My take here is that I would really love to be able to reach the women who need it the most. Not necessarily only the extroverted potential future industry organisation leaders or farm owners but the entry level farm assistants or the young mums who perhaps didn't get the level of education they wanted or deserved. I believe the make or break here will be industry support to help fund these courses in order to reach the ones who can't afford it. To help guide them into being leaders of their own lives would be a great start. I'm sure for some, it would change their lives entirely.
- Young Farmers. Although many of our women come from urban or non-farming backgrounds, Young Farmers is an integral part of farming for couples under 31 years of age – a good selection of our largest demographic. Is there a way that young farmers can be an active aspect of Farming Mums? Are there functions available where children can attend or help boost National Agri-Kids involvement? Could a relationship with Farming Mums encourage more women to get involved with the Young Farmer of the Year? Is this what Young Farmers, the organisation wants?

Another organisation to approach would be Dairy Woman's Network as they are well involved on a regional level and provide a range of dairy specific educational options.

All other primary industry organisations would be an asset to the hub, and I believe Farming Mums could in turn be an asset to them and their ongoing business.

Is it going to be a hard sell for people and industry to get involved in this idea, or are they beginning to better understand a women's role on, in and around the farm as a key decision maker, business partner and often, farmer?

Conclusions

From the survey findings, nine years of being in and around many different parts of the industry, 3.5 years of experience with Farming Mums and working closely with many farming women, I think that we need more. More support, more resources, more facilities, more options and more flexibility.

We need passionate, forward thinking and driven women who know and believe that the sky is the limit. Instead of talk and barriers we need to come up with ideas, plans and a 'Just Do It' attitude.

We need to be embracing the chosen forms of communication and community that were clearly shown within Nadine's report and her quote below.

"The way in which rural mothers find support has changed as the technological age has imprinted their lives. When asked, which group gives the best support to be a Rural Mum, almost 75 percent said social media.

Quite a few respondents commented that having a social forum that could dispense advice 24 hours a day was attractive to them, showing the traditional meetings of some women's groups was not as flexible for today's rural women. Honesty and anonymity were also common themes as to why rural women see social media as the best forum to help them." Nadine Porter 2016

While common themes such as isolation, loneliness and lack of family support have remained the same over generations, we now have a fantastic tool to help improve this. I have spoken numerous times at Rural Women meetings and talked to the women involved. Reoccurring comments of 'I wish we had something like this when we had young children' come up each time.

Instead of Nana saying 'Never marry a farmer. You'll never see him, you'll live miles from town and you'll forever be scraping enough together to survive' I want them to be saying in generations to come "Live rural, enjoy the wide-open spaces, get the chance to create your own life and let your kids grown up with mud, animals and real life experience while still being able to live a life you love"

- We need to make sure every rural woman has every chance to succeed and no excuses to not achieve anything they set out to.
- We need to support women past the current community forum. Whether it be in education, health, general support, connections and links.

- Women and their families need to get out from behind the computer and interact, BBQ and socialise with others to build their own interpersonal confidence and then communities.
- Although fewer rural women complete suicide than men – it doesn't mean they aren't struggling or need any less support. It's time to find that focus.

In conclusion, I have been lucky enough to fall on my feet after 10 years of uncertainty. I now understand that the experiences I have had and the jobs I have done spanning the sector, have all happened for a reason. Now I'd like to use these learnings to help better support others in similar positions.

More support is needed and I'm going to ensure we get it. The recent Seven Sharp news story has started the conversation and the offers have come in already which is very encouraging.

To give you further insight into Farming Mums NZ...

We have celebrated many births

We have lost at least three children to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and we all felt it

We have celebrated marriages

We have been there for women when their spouses have passed away

We have helped women who have been in hospital

We have lost women to car accidents

We have had cancer steal a few of us. Always the good ones.

We have shared hundreds of baby bumps

We have had mums using FMNZ as their main outlet when their children are sick. Sometimes terminally

We have shared produce, tears, photos, smiles and words of support

We have seen a child go through near fatal E.coli due to untreated farm house water systems

We have been there when test results for cancer have come in

We have celebrated when a lump is just a plain old lump

We have been there when parents have passed

We have been though 48 hours of horror as a woman's husband never returned from his hunting trip. Our lady's husbands went out searching. His body was found. We mourned together, we rallied around and we became stronger

We have seen women go to the very edge with depression and we have seen them come back

We have supported women through their partner's depression

We have helped get women out of dangerous and abusive situations

We have been abused, hated on and sworn at but we kept going

We have lost animals by one or large freak accident

We have seen both employees and employers ready to give up on farming altogether

We have seen undying support across industry through the typical agricultural price volatility

We have helped many, many families get jobs and advise them on relocation

We have laughed, we have laughed so, so much

We have come up with great life and farm hacks and taught others

We have been there to give urgent lifesaving animal health advice on many occasions

We have supported, we have inspired each other and we have reduced feelings of isolation

Next Steps

I have been quietly building on this concept for two years now. Kellogg has given me the push to work through my ideas, analyse them and create a clearer path and understanding.

I have a total of 113 content ideas which include organisations, people, links, resources, partnerships, printables and further detail on each

Now that I have confirmation that people understand and support these ideas, it's time to make the next move.

1. Some current organisations provide good offerings in way of support, education, community and values yet none encompass the entire package. My next step will be identifying those who wish to work together with Farming Mums and each other and to grow their own reach and scope while understanding that none of us are in competition. We all have a common goal of making farm-life easier, better, healthier and more rewarding. We should be using each other's skills to help achieve each organisations goals and see if our values align. At this point in time, Farming Mums has the largest and most diverse group of women with the biggest voice – and growing still by 50 to 150 women per week.
2. Although much emphasis is placed on social media – it is not the only way we must connect. To be able to form regional groups from Farming Mums NZ, outside of the computer screen will be an important part of how we connect and further reduce feelings of isolation and disconnection. I am hoping existing organisations will be able to help facilitate this, for example, Rural Women NZ as it will also encourage age groups to mix and the continuation of old skills and new. Perhaps some of our ladies can help the older ones get online?
3. I believe ongoing website and content creation is at least one person's full time job. Depending on what is perceived to be the best way to fund this venture, this will need to be taken into account. The current administration team is entirely voluntary and I don't wish to ask any more of them as looking after the group takes up enough time and effort away from their families as it is, of which I am again, greatly appreciative of. Initial website building will be a reasonable cost due to the multi layered function of it.
4. Content creation includes newsletter writing, research, networking with industry for links and information, potentially travel to interview professionals, keep up to date with everything happening in and around the industry, events calendar. Followed by marketing, design and more.
5. A business plan and strategic plan (which have been started) will need to be further worked on with professional input to work through what is required and how we will go about it as well as an accountant for financial management.
6. I want to ensure that industry believes in the concept and is willing to work with us and become a part of the wider community. I have recently met with groups who specifically work with migrant families nationwide and will be looking to work with them further, encouraging involvement in FMNZ.

7. Ask FMNZ members what their most pressing issues are and what they want to see rolled out on the website first. From that survey I will rate topics and set it in action.
8. The issues we face here in rural NZ are no different to other rural areas worldwide - Naik, A (September 2016) - Is this something that could be replicated elsewhere in the future should it prove to have the desired effect?

Content Ideas

Business and/or Mentoring programme

Personal Budgeting spreadsheets

Webinars with vets, nutritionists, industry leaders and more

Links to industry resources

Au Pair agency contacts

Written Blogs

Video Blogs

Industry spanning Events Calendars

Recipes and house hold tricks

Mental Health links, fact sheets and advice

Fact Sheets on FAQs

Q+A sessions with industry professionals

Membership related discounts

Merchandise i.e. Recipe Book, Beanies

Child entertainment ideas

Area specific information – Schools, supermarkets, groups etc.

Interactive functions such as a map

Downloadable and printable inspiration

Industry presentations on relevant subjects

New video and video links – butchery, servicing a bike etc.

Skype or phone access to counsellors

Free but a log-in for full functionality

Regional FMNZ group planning ability

Gardening advice

Information on cost saving and sustainability

Links to news and a rolling news column (NZXAgri?)

I also have regular contact with the very open and forward thinking, South and Mid Canterbury Rural Women group. We recently met and I have worked with them on some new ideas and ways in which we can work together in the future. These will be rolled out in our region across 2017. Hopefully in

time this we will be able to lead by example and our ideas will become of further interest to the wider organisation. The website will help to connect then enable this. The beginning of our ideas include:

1. A “Wine and Preserve” evening at the end of summer.
2. A mentoring/adopt-a-nana, programme for those living far away for family of who want someone they can talk to and have locally to interact with and learn from. This would help both parties involved as many Rural Women members have children and grandchildren living far away also.
3. Facebook/Computer/Internet upskilling from the FMNZ age group to the local Rural Women members to help them connect with friends and family as well as being able to access groups such as Farming Mums NZ.
4. A set monthly café/coffee date where children are welcome

I also wonder if when the time comes for study options becoming available, is there a chance that the bonds formed with these women could help with things such as childcare? The options here are endless and I look forward to see how both sides of the spectrum can hugely benefit from a continued and growing relationship.

References

Porter, Nadine (June 2016). Supporting Our Rural Women

Naik, Aarun (September 2016). Supporting farmer wellbeing: addressing mental health in agriculture and horticulture http://www.nuffieldinternational.org/rep_pdf/1476692236Aarun-Naik-report-2015.pdf

Hall, Carmen - Bay of Plenty Times (2014) “50,000 new jobs on the way”
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503343&objectid=11272870

Ian Proudfoot, KPMG (2016) “Connectivity is Key” <http://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/rural-news/rural-general-news/connectivity-is-key>

Conversations with

5. Lindy Nelson, CEO of Agri-Womans Development Trust
6. Penelope England, CEO of Rural Women and Fiona Gower of Rural Women.

Appendix 1 - Code of Conduct

1) Sales, Trade & Jobs posts are to be listed on our FMNZ Classifieds page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/753616741379648/>

Admin will delete any post which is more suitable for the FMNZ Classifieds page at any time.

2a) Bullying, abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour towards another FMNZ member will not be tolerated and can lead to immediate removal at the discretion of the admin.

2b) Admin can delete posts and/or comments at any time on the basis that the member is bullying, abusive, threatening or offensive. OR Posts and/or comments that are bullying, abusive, threatening or offensive can be deleted at any time.

3) Current and past Employer/Employee/Co-worker disputes should be handled in a professional manner and not within a Facebook forum. Remember that thousands of women are able to see these posts, including potential future employees/employers/co-workers.

Admin can delete a post on the basis of it not being in the best interest of the employment relationship at any time.

If you have a question regarding how to handle a specific employment situation please private message Daisy FMNZ to post this anonymously to ensure no negative impact on relationships. Further information See below under Anonymous Posting.

4) 'Screen shotting'/copying posts, conversations or photos from our closed FMNZ page is prohibited. Any member found doing so will be removed as we try to provide and maintain a safe and private environment as is possible.

5) Please keep bad language to a minimum. In a large group of people, it is likely to offend as well as the fact it is not necessary. Admin can delete a post or comment on the basis of language.

6) While you are welcome to post pictures on the page, we do not allow full nudity. Admin can delete a post on the basis of decency at any time.

7) We do not allow the sharing of animal abuse posts that originate from anti-farming organisations. These posts are designed to be emotive and ensure a strong reaction. We believe that FMNZ members are passionate about animals do not need to retaliate or discuss these posts in our cruelty free domain. Admin can remove animal rights posts at any time.

8) To ensure the safety of members and their families we have BANNED posts asking for medical advice. In a vast majority of cases it is recommend that you contact Healthline on 0800 611 116. The service is nationally available 24/7, professional and FREE.

On our own judgment Admin can delete comments or an entire post on the basis of dangerous or unsuitable advice being offered.

9) Admin can delete a post at any time if there is a similar post already or because the post it is more suitable for your personal page than a public forum.

10) If you have a post deleted by an Admin please feel free to contact us to discuss the deletion. Admin does not appreciate consequential posts complaining about deletions. We are working very hard to uphold the standards of FMNZ. Admin can delete posts that undermine our efforts at any time.

11) Admin can review membership at any time.

11a) If members are found to be contacting other members to hire them into a pyramid scheme or personal sales scheme without their permission, one warning will be given to stop, followed by removal from the page.

12) We love to encourage Farming Mums to support and help each other. To do this safely we feel we need to have guidelines to protect those in need and those who would like to help.

We do not allow money to be requested or offered on any of our Farming Mums pages. Any such posts or comments will be removed. You are welcome to pay it forward with goods and services. We

request you place these on our Farming Mums Classifieds page.

You are welcome to offer, donate or co-ordinate goods and services as assistance in individual situations. You are welcome to place links to 'Give a little' pages or similar. We request that these be related to our rural communities. In events of particular significance to our Farming Mums please approach Admin to possibly facilitate this. Any assistance is to be offered without any obligation and at your own risk.

13) To be able to efficiently run the page all Admin need to be able to contact members, if an Admin is unable to Private Message a member, the member risks being removed, either temporarily or permanently.

ANONYMOUS POSTING

Admin offer the ability to post sensitive issues anonymously.

Any member can PM Daisy FMNZ and a FMNZ Admin will respond and post on your behalf as long as it meets requirements. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/farming-mums-nz/daisy-fmnz-anon-postings/848199535267267>

These anon posts are taken seriously and regarded in a strictly confidential and respectful manner

Appendix 2 – Survey Monkey Questions

1. *Which age range do you fit in to?*
2. *Which region do you live in?*
3. *Do you think there are enough resources available to women living rurally? i.e. Education, Childcare, Healthcare etc*
4. *Would you like to further understand farming and/or your farming business?*
5. *Would you watch, use and participate in vlogs, webinars or live interviews? i.e. Industry leaders, Bank managers, Life coaches, Nutritionists etc*
6. *Do you believe Farming Mums NZ would benefit from having online resources, based around common questions and issues from the page? i.e. FAQs, Links, Printables*
7. *If you were given the option of free to cheap online learning from personal subjects to farming and beyond, would this be helpful?*
8. *In the event, we can't achieve complete funding, How much is the MOST you would be willing to pay for this access annually?*
9. *If a full and well layered website, completely focused to the 'Farming Mum' or rural woman was available - What would YOU like it to include?*
10. *While we're here - Do you have any constructive criticism for the FMNZ Facebook Group?*

Appendix 3 — Relevant Organisations

- Agri-Womans Development Trust

‘Supported Growth’

www.awdt.org.nz

Created by Lindy Nelson in 2009 after doing the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme. Lindy recognised the lack of education options for rural women and sought out to improve that. The Agri-Women’s Development Trust is a charitable organisation that provides a trusted and enabling environment for all agri-women to realise their potential and grow New Zealand’s agriculture sector.

Strategic partners are AGMARDT, Beef + Lamb, ANZ, DairyNZ and FMG. Programme Partners include, CMR, LIC and Red Meat Profit Partnership. NZX Agri is a sponsor.

‘Our purpose - to provide a trusted and enabling environment for all agri-women to realise their potential and grow the agricultural sector.’

- Rural Women NZ

‘Strong, Enduring Rural Environments’

www.ruralwomen.org.nz

RW was established in 1925. It is a charitable, membership-based organisation which supports people in rural communities. Rural women are the leading voice behind policy regarding women in rural communities and all the issues that come along with it. I believe the average membership age is around 65 which can be seen as a down side, but I see it as a strength that can be utilised.

‘Growing dynamic communities’

- Dairy Women’s Network

‘Success Through Inspiration’

www.dwn.co.nz

DWN has its own range of dairy modules as well as specific support and advice on dairying and a yearly conference. They have individual small regional Facebook pages. Their regional groups include practical days on such subjects as calf rearing, running a well-oiled office, internet banking, tax planning as well as dressing for success and holiday planning.

Their prime network partners are – DairyNZ and Ballance. Gold sponsors are ASB and NZ Farm. Silver sponsors, Seales Winslow, MSD, Deosan, LIC, Crowe Horwath, Xero and Primary ITO. Network partners – HazardCo, Cash Manager Rural, Meridian and Figured.

‘Our vision is to be world leaders for women in dairying. We are here to support and inspire NZ women to success in the business of dairying’

Appendix 4 – Daisy FMNZ

The 'Daisy FMNZ' Facebook account was set up in March 2015 to take the pressure of the 'Anonymous Question' posting off myself.

The purpose of the account is to allow members to ask questions that could be embarrassing, employment related, case sensitive or anything that could compromise their situation.

This is an extremely well-used function of Farming Mums and there is nothing the account hasn't heard or seen. It can get anywhere from 2 – 12 post requests each day.

The account is 90% run by a close, long-time friend of mine who is extremely conscientious, experienced in all things farming and mental health and prefers to remain anonymous to all but our tight administration team. This not only makes our posters feel comfortable but it also allows us to speak from an unbiased view and without any concern of information getting out and ruining the privacy aspect.

I run the account if she is away or needs a second opinion. I trust her judgement immensely and she is an extremely valuable asset to our team and a good friend.

Appendix 5 – Existing Group Reach

Farming Mums NZ Facebook Group has 7700 members

Rural Women has around 1500 paid members, and 3700 Facebook 'likers'*

AWDT as a charitable, educational organisation having 1900 Facebook 'likers'*

Dairy Woman's Network has around 6000 Facebook 'likers'*

Young Farmers has 6000 Facebook 'likers'*

Young Rural Ladies page has 6000 'likers'*

*As of 20th September 2016.

