

Working together as Farmers

As the economic fortunes of agriculture change and the grim reality of very tough times ahead becomes evident, maybe, just maybe, it is time to work together.

I mean, we all used to. Our parents used to form up groups of farmers to go and dock lambs, shear sheep, and put hay in the shed, all helping each other with no cost to anybody, say for good food out on the job and a pint bottle of beer at the end of the day. The labour was free and the times were good. The district had close bonds and everybody stood side by side. Farm running costs were kept to an absolute minimum, by pooling resources and labour.

When I went to work in Canterbury in the late 60's it was the same there. They shared the combine harvesters, the grass lifters, we picked up each others hay, we helped with each others shearing and the times were good. I guess one of the greatest advantages of working together was the communication between the farmers. The chatter about the weather, the sports, the cows, the sheep but the chatter is an essential part of our well being, and also important for our mental health. It is an opportunity to find out that our neighbour is just as short of feed or has the same number of empty cows as we do. Working together brings chatter and gossip, but it is all good for you.

When problems arise, maybe trying to work together to find a solution is better than rushing off to your respective solicitors to spend a lot of your hard earned income for often a poor and bitter result. Does this sound familiar, it is. If you can not sort the problem find someone independent that can help you. Agree to agree before starting any dialogue and get the person to help you get a positive agreement, rather than making another enemy. Share milking disputes can be a horrible experience the fight can be expensive, and very destructive to all parties involved. Maybe a little more give and take by everyone and a will to work together would help here. Try to resolve the issues by talking about it together, in a calm and responsible manner. If you can

not find someone who can assist you with this, than again I say agree to agree before starting.

Pride is often a sticking point in any dispute because, we as farmers are a very proud bunch. Giving ground may initially look like a weakness, but it will become a strength in the long run. As the economy hardens I am finding more and more people want to work together to solve their own problems. They appear happy to communicate rather than taking an entrenched position. I have also been amazed at how much more receptive Local Body Authorities appear to be to find a solution rather than their previous dictatorial position. If you go into the local Council with a problem, it maybe better to say to them that you have a problem and can we work together to get a result, rather than going in with a hostile attitude and trying to pick an argument with them.

IN SUMMARY:

Imagine how much better life would be, if we could all work together more often.

We can pool our resources, machinery, labour and especially the knowledge for the betterment of our fellowman and of agriculture.

We can save money and increase the chatter with our neighbours. Increasing chatter is very good for our own mental health as well. It is up to us as individually to make a difference.

Try to communicate and solve problems yourself, offer to work together rather than being difficult.

Offering to assist your neighbour might just be the turning point in your life where you make a new friend and you are able to communicate what you are wanting.

The amazing thing is that is all FREE.

These are the opinions of Don Fraser of Fraser Farm Finance. Any decisions made should not be based on this article alone and appropriate professional assistance should be sought.

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