

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS OFFICE

## AMBITIOUS HEAD SHEPHERD

writer **PETER WHITE**

photo **GEOFF HORRELL**

**“You get good days and you get bad days but you make the most of the good days. I love the lifestyle and the dogs,” says TAIN LAING.**

“You get so much of a thrill watching them go from a pup to a broken-in dog, going to dog trials, and proving you have done well with your dog training.”

Tain is a head shepherd working in Gore. While every day is different and the weather plays a huge part in the job, he just loves having the great outdoors as his office.

The 23-year-old grew up in Alexandra, not from a farming background, but he knew from an early age he wanted to work on farms.

At Dunstan High School, he worked at Moutere Station as part of the successful Gateway programme. He was then awarded a cadetship to work and train at Jeff Farm, located between Mataura and Clinton in South Otago.

Jeff Farm is managed for The Salvation Army Trust Board and carries approximately 30,000 stock units, with 70 per cent sheep, 20 per cent beef cattle and 10 per cent deer.

Tain had two rewarding years at Jeff Farm, where he completed his Level 3 qualification through Primary ITO.

This training is done through block courses off-site and on-farm practical training, which includes mustering, shearing, general stock work, tractor work, fencing, winter grazing rotations and training dogs.

“I highly recommend Primary ITO,” says Tain. “It is more hands-on than other courses. You have to go and do it yourself, and I learn so much better by the practical way, rather than reading about it.”

Tain’s skill working with dogs was evident when he and his dog Smudge took out the South Island maiden dog trial championships and finished second in the New Zealand finals in 2018.

Tain has worked for Grant Brothers, who own six farms in Gore, since he finished at Jeff Farm just over three years ago. He has since achieved his Primary ITO Level 4 qualification and is now a head shepherd.

“I am quite proud to get Level 4 because it is a big step from Level 3 and is quite a lot more work. I have

to fill out monthly reports now about the weather and soil temperature and what you did over the month with stock.

“I have learnt a lot on the job I have now, but you should be learning every day really. The people you work with teach you stuff, so it is really good.”

Tain took Woodwork, Maths, Geography, Food

Technology and Ag Science (via correspondence) in Year 13.

His advice to school leavers is to have a good attitude and work ethic, plus take every opportunity you get given, even if you are not keen on doing it. Tain’s goal is to be a stock manager in the next 5–10 years, a farm manager in 10–15 years, and then move to owning his own farm, hopefully.



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TAIN LAING

### KEY FACTS



- **TAIN LAING** WORKS AS A **HEAD SHEPHERD** IN GORE FOR THE **GRANT BROTHERS**.
- HE HAS ACHIEVED HIS **LEVEL 3** AND **LEVEL 4** QUALIFICATION THROUGH **PRIMARY ITO**, WHICH HE **RECOMMENDS** AS A **REALLY HANDS-ON** COURSE.
- **TAIN** WORKED AT **MOUTERE STATION** AS PART OF HIS **GATEWAY** PROGRAMME AT **HIGH SCHOOL**, AFTER WHICH HE WAS THEN AWARDED A **CADETSHIP** TO WORK AND TRAIN AT **JEFF FARM**.



For more information on courses in sheep and beef through Primary ITO, visit [www.primaryito.ac.nz](http://www.primaryito.ac.nz)

For more information on career opportunities with Beef + Lamb New Zealand, visit [www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com)