

# FORGING NEW PATHWAYS

## ENGINEERING APPRENTICESHIP

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **SANDRA HENDERSON**

**Working hard and going the extra mile in her job has paid off for AIMEE KELLS.**

The 20-year-old began in the processing room bagging and packing meat in 2021 at the large Silver Fern Farms plant in Hawera, Taranaki, before working as a trades assistant. In July, she changed tack and started her Maintenance and Diagnostic Engineering apprenticeship.

The end goal is a National Certificate in Maintenance and Diagnostics in Mechanical Engineering.

A maintenance and diagnostics engineer makes, fits and repairs parts for machines and related equipment used in places such as factories, farms, mining sites and oil refineries.

Aimee is excited to be moving into the next stage of her career with Silver Fern Farms. Her trades assistant role has been good grounding for her apprenticeship – she says it is challenging as there is lots of information and processes to remember.

“I like the hands-on aspect and taking things apart and putting them back together – I do a lot of the maintenance jobs that don’t require a full engineer. I am also doing a lot of welding and am getting ready for a project which will involve that.

“I also do general work in the plant as well. I come in the morning before the shift starts and do a pre-op. We service all the machines, oil them and check they are running.”

Aimee says working extra shifts and getting her hands dirty on less desirable jobs is how she got to where she is today.

“It is definitely all about putting in some extra effort and showing the company you are prepared to do what they want you to do.”

Engineering was not something she had planned to do but there is a strong engineering history in her family.

“My dad is an engineer and I know a lot of people who do engineering – but I never thought I would do it myself until I had a go. I really enjoy doing that sort of work.”

Aimee went to Taranaki Diocesan School for Girls from Years 9–12 and then moved to Stratford High School for her final year, where she took Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Statistics and Tourism.

With her strong science background, she was keen to do lab work and train to work in pathology – but then COVID-19 lockdowns changed everything. Aimee found distance learning challenging so she took a job at Silver Fern Farms and has worked her way to a new career in engineering.

“I told myself when I started I would do three years and earn some money and see what I wanted to do after that. But now I have started doing engineering work, I can see a future doing that.”

Job opportunities in the industry are plentiful at the moment as there is a shortage of engineers.

Aimee says school leavers interested in this career path should have a good grounding in Maths, Statistics and Calculus as there is technical drawing involved.



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AIMEE KELLS

### KEY FACTS



- **AIMEE KELLS** IS DOING A MAINTENANCE AND DIAGNOSTIC ENGINEERING APPRENTICESHIP WITH **SILVER FERN FARMS**.
- SHE BEGAN WORKING FOR **SILVER FERN FARMS** BAGGING AND PACKING MEAT IN THE PROCESSING ROOM IN 2021.
- **AIMEE** STUDIED PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY, STATISTICS AND TOURISM IN YEAR 13.



For more information on apprenticeships and careers at Silver Fern Farms, visit [www.silverfernfarms.co.nz](http://www.silverfernfarms.co.nz)