

CALL GOES OUT FOR PIG FARMERS

HIGH DEMAND BUT SHORT SUPPLY

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **MARK BRIMBLECOMBE**

If you're considering farming, you should think about pig farming as a potential career. That's the view of 22-year-old **JONATHAN AUSTIN** who works as a pig breeder at Aorere Farm, west of Whanganui – a large farm with 4500 pigs in total.

"There are plenty of opportunities. We need more young people to have a good idea of pig farming because we have a very high demand for trained staff but we have a shortage of skilled employees in New Zealand," says Jonathan.

"There is definitely a good career in the management side of things, which is what I am trying to achieve."

Jonathan works with 450 pigs on the breeding unit from mating (which is 70 per cent artificial and 30 per cent natural) right through its various life stages (giving birth, weaning and growing into porkers) before the pigs are shipped off to another farm in Taranaki.

"What I enjoy most is seeing the piglets born – the training I have received helps me understand

the processes involved. It is amazing to see a tiny little piglet grow into an animal that can weigh up to a massive 300 kilos.

"You have to have a passion for animals as well. The health and welfare of the animal comes first. That is the big thing."

Jonathan has a National Certificate in Pork Production (Level 3). He has started his National Certificate in Pork Production (Level 4) through Primary ITO and has around one year to go. He does lectures through online learning and the practical aspects of the on-job training are signed-off by the farm's manager.

He says working with pigs is very rewarding. "Pigs are actually very intelligent, as intelligent as a three-year-old child. They can remember your face, remember you're the person who feeds it and looks after it. They are clean animals as well – not dirty as people think they are.

"They are quite different to working with cows and sheep. They are unique in the way they are and have

different behaviour. It is important to understand the psychological side of it too.

"It is interesting to watch their reaction to different things while working with them."

Jonathan was both brought up and home schooled for the majority of his secondary school years on the pig farm he works on. In Year 13 he focused on the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and Agriculture.

He says another positive aspect of working with pigs is the shorter working hours.

Compared to dairy farming, the regular routine of pig farming means farm workers can plan their time around a set workday.

New Zealand
PORK

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JONATHAN
AUSTIN



KEY FACTS



- **JONATHAN AUSTIN** WORKS AS A **PIG BREEDER** AT **AORERE FARM**, A LARGE FARM OF 4500 PIGS THAT IS WEST OF **WHANGANUI**.
- HE HAS A **NATIONAL CERTIFICATE IN PORK PRODUCTION (LEVEL 3)** AND IS CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING THE **NATIONAL CERTIFICATE IN PORK PRODUCTION (LEVEL 4)**. HE HAS ALSO WON THE **PORK INDUSTRY'S STOCKPERSON OF THE YEAR AWARD**.
- **JONATHAN** SAYS THERE IS A **SHORTAGE OF SKILLED WORKERS** IN THE **PIG INDUSTRY** AND THEY ARE IN HIGH DEMAND.



For more information on careers in the pig industry, visit www.nzpork.co.nz

For more information on studying Pork Production through Primary ITO, visit www.primaryito.ac.nz