



written by **SARA CARBERY**



photograph by **MEGAN GRAHAM**

BUILDING WEALTH VIA DAIRYING

VARIETY, FREEDOM AND ANIMALS

SAM HODSELL HAS FARMED ANIMALS FOR ALMOST AS LONG AS HE CAN REMEMBER, HAND-REARING CALVES AND LAMBS AS A YOUNGSTER GROWING UP ON THE FAMILY FARM IN SOUTHLAND.

These days the 24-year-old is the proud owner of 280 cows, which he estimates are worth around \$450,000. Sam's herd numbers have increased tenfold in the past two years, the result of prudent buying and selling. "Dairying is a great way to build your wealth," he says.

This is just one of the many things Sam enjoys about his chosen industry. Others include the career progression pathway that exists via sharemilking, the fact you can work your way up to eventually owning your own farm, and the attitude of the older, more experienced farmers. "It's not a competitive industry. There's a lot of mentoring and industry sharing."

With a three-year Bachelor of Agriculture from Lincoln University under his belt, Sam travelled around Europe with a friend for six weeks in 2013, staying on farms in Germany, France, England, Scotland and Ireland.

"It really opens your mind, and makes you realise how lucky we are back here. In Europe, land's not traded the way it is here, there are no sharemilkers. It changes your mindset a lot."

Sam is a lower order sharemilker on his parents' farm. He provides labour, machinery and some of the cows, and receives a percentage share of the income. His goal is to be a 50:50 sharemilker in five years' time. In the

meantime, he plans to take a couple of years off to gain experience, working a number of short-term contracts, including a cattle muster in Australia.

Some of Sam's classmates from Lincoln have also become farmers. Others now work as rural bank managers, farm consultants,

fertiliser reps, agronomists and irrigation specialists.

Sam took agriculture as a subject at Southland Boys' High School, along with biology, geography, statistics, and PE in Year 13.

In hindsight, metalwork and woodwork would have been helpful, he says.

So what does Sam enjoy most about farming?

"The variety of jobs, working with animals, the freedom I have to make decisions and change things on the farm, and the fact that as a dairy farmer you can track your performance every day."

Surprisingly it's not the early starts that bother him, "although they do affect your social life a bit", he says, "It's the weeks of rain New Zealand sometimes cops that can make farming challenging".

Sam's advice to anyone interested in farming is: "Go to uni, even if you just do a diploma. You'll meet likeminded people who you'll have with you for support for the rest of your life. And spend some time working on a farm first to see if you enjoy it."



THE 24-YEAR-OLD IS THE PROUD OWNER OF 280 COWS, WHICH HE ESTIMATES ARE WORTH AROUND \$450,000. **SAM'S HERD NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED TENFOLD IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE RESULT OF PRUDENT BUYING AND SELLING.** "Dairying is a great way to build your wealth," he says.

KEY FACTS



- **SAM HODSELL HAS A BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURE FROM LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.**
- HE WORKS AS A **LOWER ORDER SHAREMILKER**, AND AIMS TO BECOME A 50:50 SHAREMILKER WITHIN FIVE YEARS.
- **SAM TOOK AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, STATISTICS AND PE IN YEAR 13.** HE SAYS THAT METALWORK AND WOODWORK WOULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL SUBJECTS TO HAVE TAKEN.



For more information on the career options available in agriculture, visit www.dairynz.co.nz/careers or www.growingnz.org.nz