

# LOVE THE LAND

writer **SARA CARBERY** // photographer **PETER McDERMOTT**

## MAKE THE OUTDOORS YOUR OFFICE

**"Farming is way more than a nine to five 'job'," says HEATHER GEE-TAYLOR. "It's a lifestyle."**

The 24-year-old runs 100 cows and 650 sheep on 400 acres she leases from her parents, but most of her week is spent working on the family farm in Rangiwahia, where she lives, and on another farm down the road. She is also a councillor on the Manawatu District Council.

While no two days are the same, most days start with letting her dogs out of their kennels and setting off to shift sheep or cattle. Other jobs that need doing at various times include drenching, dagging, shearing, docking, weaning, fencing, building, mowing and feeding out.

"It is a physical job, which makes getting into bed easy!"

Heather boarded at Nga Tawa Diocesan School in Marton during her high school years. In Year 13, she took Statistics, Business Studies, Accounting, Economics and Biology.

Her business-focused subjects stood her in good stead when she enrolled in a Bachelor of Commerce (Agriculture) at Lincoln University.

"I totally would recommend Lincoln to anyone with an interest in farming," she says. "There are so many degree options now and the agricultural industry is hungry for young people with a passion to work and learn."

After graduating, Heather spent 12 months working in rural banking before deciding she didn't want to be "stuck in an office" anymore. "I went out farming and have never looked back."

While there's a lot to love about farming, including working outdoors and with animals every day, she admits it has its challenges. "In the middle of winter when it has been raining for a week solid it's pretty hard to get yourself motivated and out the door."

Another challenge is understanding the purpose of what farmers do and where animals end up – "on a plate".

"It can be a hard concept to grasp but I think once people see how well the animals are looked after then it's pretty easy to get over that point."

If you're considering a career in farming, Heather's advice is to "go for it! If you aren't from a farm that's even better!"

"If you aren't 100 per cent sure whether the hands-on farmer role is for you then make sure you learn what else goes into making our sector tick. We need fertiliser reps, seed reps, vets, engineers, fencers, fuel reps, mechanics . . . the list goes on." Heather hopes to one day take over the family business.

"This requires building up my own equity to buy some of the land off my parents. Sheep and cattle are quite expensive so in leasing 400 acres I am giving myself the chance to pay off some debt and start to build some equity for the future."

"I love the land and one day I hope to raise my kids (when I have them) the way I was raised – on the family farm."

“THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IS HUNGRY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A PASSION TO WORK AND LEARN.”

HEATHER GEE-TAYLOR



### KEY FACTS



- **HEATHER GEE-TAYLOR HAS A BACHELOR OF COMMERCE (AGRICULTURE) FROM LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.**
- **SHE RUNS 100 COWS AND 650 SHEEP ON 400 ACRES, WORKS ON THE FAMILY FARM IN RANGIWAHIA AND ON ANOTHER FARM DOWN THE ROAD. SHE IS ALSO A COUNCILLOR ON THE MANAWATU DISTRICT COUNCIL.**
- **IN YEAR 13 AT NGA TAWA DIOCESAN SCHOOL, HEATHER STUDIED STATISTICS, BUSINESS STUDIES, ACCOUNTING, ECONOMICS AND BIOLOGY.**



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