



KEEP SAFE, KEEP FARMING

Plan ahead to keep people safe

After several near misses on his farm near Greymouth, Colin van de Geest took action.

West Coast farmer Colin van der Geest has always taken a proactive approach to health and safety – but he’s introduced further measures following several near misses involving stock and quad bikes.

Colin and his nine-strong team milk 2255 cows over three farms at Atarau and Aratika, near Greymouth.

They have identified hazards on the farm and Colin holds regular team health and safety meetings where they discuss any issues that have arisen and plan ahead to manage risk around upcoming tasks.

“Our major hazards are quad bikes, stock, machinery and a combination of all three,” says Colin. “Those hazards stay the same all year round, but the events of different seasons affect how you manage them.

“So for instance, in June we’ll talk about any issues that have arisen and also how we’ll manage the winter conditions and risks around feeding stock, such as the roll over risk when you are carrying a straw bale on the front end loader into a paddock.

During calving, we’ll discuss things like the best lifting techniques when lifting calves, the temperament of the cows and how we are going to manage fatigue. It’s just planning ahead and reminding people about the steps we all need to take to keep people safe.”

“We’ve had three near misses which have involved quad bikes and cows.”

Colin has also provided extra training for staff in quad bike use following several near misses.

“We’ve had three near misses which have involved quad bikes and cows. Fortunately we ensure all our staff wear helmets and we have roll bars on the quad bikes. Without those measures, the outcomes of these near misses would have been very different.”



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In the most recent incident, one of Colin's workers was driving a quad bike and herding a cow out of a paddock and into a lane.

"It's a flat site and at the end of the land there is a narrow 1.5m gap between a strainer post and a drain," says Colin.

"When an animal isn't going the way you want it to, common sense can go out of the window"

"The crafty cow decided to go through there and our guy tried to cut her off with the bike. The cow made it through, but my man rolled the bike into the drain. He escaped with bumps and bruises, but if it had not been for the roll bar, the bike would

have fallen on top of him in the drain. He also hit his head on rocks but his helmet saved him from injury.

"He was working alone and it would probably have been a couple of hours before I went looking for him. We're also having the strainer post moved to make the gap wider and adapting the drain so it can't be rolled into."

In another incident, one of Colin's men was chasing a cow and tried to get past it in the lane. He collided with the cow and rolled the quad bike.

"When an animal isn't going the way you want it to, common sense can go out of the window," says Colin. "Now, as part of quad bike training, we emphasise strongly that the combination of cows and quad bikes is a major risk and that even in the heat of the moment you have to make safety your first priority.

In that kind of situation, or if a cow is agitated, then leave it. Cows can be moved later, we want our people to go home safe and well."

KEY POINTS

- > Riders must be trained/experienced enough to do the job.
- > Choose the right vehicle for the job.
- > Always wear a helmet.
- > Don't let kids ride adult quad bikes.

For more examples and information visit saferfarms.org.nz



Photos by Jules Anderson Photography

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