

# Specialist training for dairy workers

## Farm Skills

with Iain Hyndman

**T**HE NEW Ag Challenge “Future Generation of Dairy” programme has proven very popular with the youth of Wanganui.

The 11 participants, soon to be 12, are working through a 33-week programme of study that will see them graduate with two National Certificates in Dairy. One is at Level 2 and focuses on developing the foundation agricultural skills required for someone who is interested in starting a career in farming.

This training is being funded under the Government’s Youth Guarantee initiative.

A quote from the website says: “Youth Guarantee initiatives are about improving the transition from school to work, by providing a wider range of learning opportunities, making better use of the education network, and creating clear pathways from school to work and study.”

With the introduction of this new programme, Ag Challenge has employed John Church as a new member of the tutoring staff.

“John, while an accomplished horseman in his own right with numerous national titles to his name, comes to us with extensive experience in the agriculture industry having worked in the central North Island on some large dairy farming operations,” Ag Challenge manager Peter Macdonald said. “Coupled with his experience in working with youth and young people through coaching of rugby and rugby league, he has worked with youth on some of the large



**MOULDING MINDS:** New Ag Challenge tutor John Church (centre, in blue) is shaping young minds for the future of dairying.

PHOTO/SUPPLIED  
JOHN\_CHURCH

farming operations. The opportunity for young people to enter this industry and gain an understanding of its requirements is something that John is very passionate about.”

Mr Church said it was about allowing these young people to experience and gain an understanding of what is required now by the agriculture sector.

He has very quickly gained the respect of his peers and the students on the programme, with the students using words to describe the course such as “excellent”, “mean”, “the best tutor and course in Wanganui” — just some of the comments gained from the students who are about to graduate in the next three weeks with their Level 2 National Certificates.

“John is a natural when it comes to working with young people — poetry in motion,” Mr Macdonald said.

Mr Church and the agriculture team have designed a graduation day for the students and their families that will involve them demonstrating the skills they have learned so far in their first 15 weeks on the programme.

The day will provide a really good foundation for those students to start focusing on their next National Certificate at Level 3 in Dairy Milking.

This next phase of their training will conclude in September/October of 2015 and means that students will have experienced the rigours of calving and the starting of a new season.

Work experience will make up a significant aspect of this next phase of training as it is at Level 3 that students will be expected to demonstrate solid practical skills associated with milking cows.

“If you may have a position

opening up then we are happy to provide access to our students for you to interview, provide work experience and try a couple of students to see who would fit your work place,” Mr Macdonald said. “So dairy farmers, tuck this date away under your hat and, if you are requiring staff in the later part of the year, then don’t hesitate to contact John and discuss your opportunity.

“We do have our Level 3, 18-week Dairy Milking students graduating in another 5-6 weeks, in time for the new season start, so if you are looking for students to start the new season then do not hesitate to contact Ag Challenge to discuss this and arrange meeting these graduates. Some have already received job offers for the new season as a result of the work experience, so well done to these students and thanks to the industry for the continued support of this training.”