



# 'The ability to grow

Richard Loader

Full herd ownership and 50/50 sharemilking is on the near horizon for achiever and goal setter Jamey Allin and his partner Jenna Wills.

In their third season contract-milking 620 cows for South Island dairy farm owner, Dairy Holdings Ltd, Jamey and Jenna have progressively invested in their own herd since joining Dairy Holdings in 2018.

When Jamey and Jenna first started on Dairy Holdings' 165-hectare effective dairy unit, Braisby, in Dunsandel, they arrived with the usual farm machinery but no cows of their own.

Contemplating investment in a rental property at the end of their first season, Jamey's supervisor suggested investing in their own cows, which they would lease back into the milking herd.

"So we bought thirty in-calf heifers at the end of the first season," says Jamey "There's also a really good opportunity to rear surplus calves for Dairy Holdings and in that second season we reared 65 heifer replacements for ourselves. At the end of the second season – May just been – we borrowed money and purchased 70 mixed age cows, giving us 100 cows for this current season that we lease back in."

The purchase of 22 calves from a neighbouring Dairy Holdings' property brought Jamey and Jenna's heifer calves up to 87 and next season the couple will lease around 180 cows back to Dairy Holdings.

"The ability to grow our own stock numbers at our pace is awesome. The usual dairy farm progress is to go from a low order sharemilker straight into 50/50. If you go 50/50 with 600 cows at \$1500 a cow that's \$900,000 and you need 40% equity so you need to save up \$360,000 minimum plus have all your farm machinery and a massive overdraft. Whereas we can say, 'well we have \$50,000, we'll go and buy 30 cows'. You have the ability to grow at whatever pace you would like."

Jamey says the ability to progressively grow their

business at their own pace is not the only benefit of working for Dairy Holdings.

With extensive dairy farming operations in the South Island, Dairy Holdings large support team works closely with Jamey to ensure the best results are achieved. "There's a health & safety person, a sustainability person, a farm systems coach – so there's a team of people who help you. We also have our farm supervisors and each week we walk around the farm, recording pasture measurements in the computer system."

Three kilometres out of Dunsandel, the fully irrigated farm is long and narrow with clay soil that gets very wet through the middle section, particularly during the spring period, requiring careful management.

"Come the spring we have a calving mob, a springing mob, a colostrum mob and a milking mob – you have all these cows and baby calves everywhere and it's wet and muddy. That is the challenge. Dairy Holdings operates a 100% grass system and we have to manage that by stock management and the numbers of cows in each mob. We identify the paddocks we're going to re-grass and use those as sacrifice paddocks in the event of a major rain event.

"When it's raining we try to feed the cows more to fill them up so they sit down and don't pug the ground so much."

The ends of the farm are a bit dryer than the middle section and are used for calving.

While Dairy Holdings has a policy of wintering 1/6th of all cows on farm, because Braisby is so wet all cows are wintered off and normally back home by the 1st of August.

Growing up in the small North Canterbury township of Woodend, dairy farming is all Jamey ever wanted to do and scored his first relief-milking job at 15, while still at school.

Now with a family that includes Jenna, nine year old Kurt and seven month of Maisey, farming affords a lifestyle where Jamey can enjoy the outdoors as well as quality time with his children.

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# at our own pace is awesome'



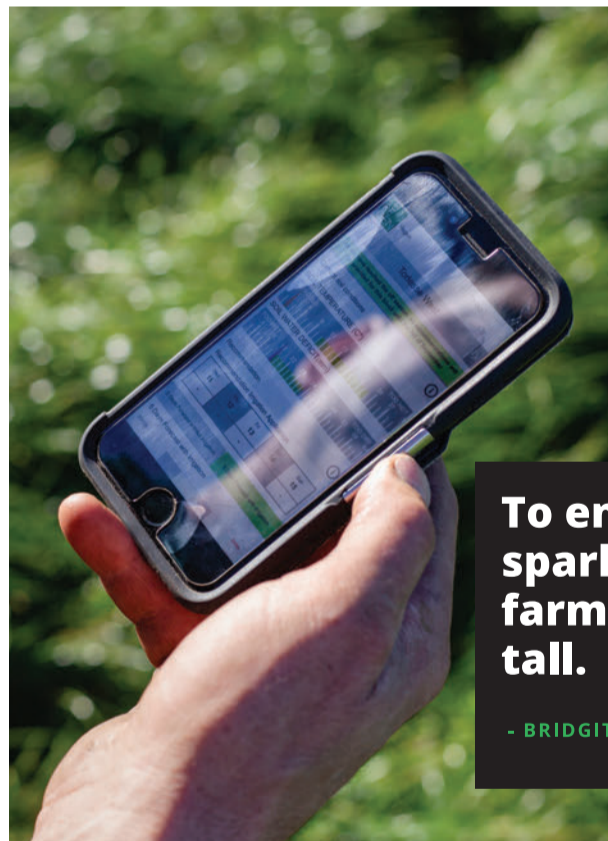
Jamey Allin and Jenna Wills with Maisey (7 months) and Kurt (9) at Braisby dairy unit in Dunsandel.

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