

Media Release

Thursday 8 December

## Farmstrong's going international

Living well is the key to farming well – regardless of where you live. That's why Farmstrong – a joint initiative between rural insurer FMG and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) – will be heading to the Chatham Islands next week to host a Healthy Thinking workshop for sheep and beef farmers.

Farmstrong's Gerard Vaughan, along with author and medical doctor Dr Tom Mulholland, will fly out on Monday 12 December to spend just under a week in the Chatham Islands to share tools and resources on how locals can better cope with the ups and downs of farming.

The workshop will look at how small changes to the way farmers live, can not only improve the way they farm, but also help them look after themselves, their family and stay in good shape – both physically and emotionally.

The pair will then be meeting with eight families on Pitt Island to talk about Healthy Thinking and to carry out health checks using a new app called Firstcheck.

"How you look after yourself has a huge impact on how well you farm. If you take time to look after yourself by making small, regular investments in your physical and emotional fitness, then you're in a stronger position to take care of your business, your staff, your family and your community," says Gerard.

"We will cover the topics that are up on the Farmstrong website such as fatigue, nutrition, sleep, stress and unhealthy emotions like frustration and anger, and more importantly how to manage them."

The opportunity to head to the Chathams resulted from discussions with Beef + Lamb New Zealand, who already have a presence in the area. They were keen to get Farmstrong and Dr Tom's Healthy Thinking programme in front of farmers on the island. These farmers face similar challenges to their North and South Island counterparts, such as fluctuating markets, weather conditions and isolation. The lack of infrastructure, transport and access to skilled labour such as shearers and fencers, also pose challenges.

"We hope that farmers there will see that Farmstrong is a programme that they can participate in and benefit from, says Gerard.

"We're also keen to capture stories of what farmers on the Chathams are doing to take care of themselves so we can share their insights with other farmers back home."

Dr Tom is no stranger to the Chathams and the opportunities and challenges locals face, he worked as a doctor on the islands a few years ago and this will be his fifth visit to one of the most remarkable places and communities on the planet.

**ENDS**

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**About Farmstrong**

Farmstrong is a non-commercial give back initiative which has been founded by rural insurer FMG and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF). The Movember Foundation has also provided funding via MHF. It aims to give farmers access to the tools, resources and information needed to take better care of themselves and in turn, their farming business, their families, staff and community. For more information on Farmstrong please visit: <http://farmstrong.co.nz>

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