



By Sam Whitelock, Farmstrong ambassador

Farmstrong's all about the things you can do to keep well, even when you're under the pump on the farm. Knowing how to create a new habit is one of the things that will help with this.

Sometimes we set goals – whether it's to get fitter, lose weight or learn something new – only to discover a few months down the track we haven't made the progress we hoped.

So here's what I have learnt from professional rugby that has helped me create a new habit so it stays locked in?

This is the first in a series of articles by Sam about what farmers, farm staff and their families can do to stay Farmstrong when they are 'under the pump'.



Small, measurable steps

One of the keys for me is to take small, achievable steps.

For example, say you want to get fitter and be in better condition to work on the farm. A small achievable step could be choosing one time each day when you walk to do some of the work instead of taking the bike or staying in the vehicle. It could be that you park further away from the shed, house or gate so you get in a bit of a walk, or you walk some of the way to bring in the stock.



It doesn't sound like a big commitment, but if you start with small realistic goals like that, you'll soon be racking up lot of extra movement every week which is good for both mind and body. Over time that will become something that you just do each day.

The most important thing is that you choose a habit that you can stick to regularly for at least a couple of months. It helps if your targets are small initially.

Keeping your habit changes small will make your brain think the new habit is easier to do. This helps conserve energy, as planning big changes to routines can sap a lot of energy. Once you have the small change 'locked in' as a new habit, you can then move on to the next level of challenge.



Use a trigger that reminds you

One of the habits I've changed over the last year is how I do my injury rehab. I used to find this a tricky thing to schedule and remember to do.

So now I do it at least twice a day while I'm brushing my teeth. It might sound funny, but these days I brush my teeth standing on one leg so I can do my ankle and knee rehab at the same time. I realise that I'd really struggled before with rehab because I'd never made a specific time during the day to do it. But now it's easy to do because I don't have to think about it. I just do it when I clean my teeth.



Share your goal with someone

The other thing I find that really helps me establish a new habit is to tell someone else. If I want to change something in my life or training routine I write it out at the start of each year on some paper and put it up on the wall so other people can see it.

Once other people know about your goal they can provide the sort of encouragement and support that will motivate you to stick at it. When you reach your goal tell others and celebrate the achievement.

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Diary Regular Time Off

One habit that is definitely worth developing is regular breaks and time off. Whether you're playing rugby or working in the rural world taking time off is massive. It helps you stay fresh so you can perform at your best. So in your work diary or daily schedule put in when you will be having shorter breaks and longer days away, and try and stick to them. By having it in the diary it means that you can plan your other work around it.

Regular small breaks, like stopping for a cuppa and longer breaks away from your work are both important. Over summer I make a real effort to connect with my friends and family outside rugby and recharge my batteries. Connecting with mates freshens me up and gets me talking about things apart from my job. Time away definitely energises you and can give you a new perspective on things when you are back.



There's a ton of videos, stories and ideas on our website www.farmstrong.co.nz that farmers have shared about things that have helped them to become a better farmer. So check these out and lock in the things that will work for you in 2018. ■



Find out what works for you then **lock it in.**

Sam Whitelock
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