

Farmstrong

Live Well, Farm Well

Sam Whitelock,
Farmstrong Ambassador



About Farmstrong

Farmstrong is a rural wellbeing programme that launched in 2015 to help farmers, their families and farm workers develop habits to improve their wellbeing. It is a community give-back, founded by rural insurer Farmers Mutual Group (FMG) and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF). ACC joined as a strategic partner in 2016 and the Movember Foundation provided funding support at the beginning.

Farmstrong takes the science of wellbeing to busy farmers. It shares the things they can do to look after themselves and the people in their business, so they prevent injuries, perform well, live well and farm well.

Our Team

A Governance Group made up of executives from the founding partner organisations oversees Farmstrong. It is delivered by a small team of two full-time equivalents alongside FMG employees who donate their time. MHF and other specialists are contracted for their expertise. Rural supporters contribute time and energy too.

A Phased Approach

Introducing new ideas about wellbeing and injury prevention to a sector requires a planned approach. Prior to its launch in June 2015, Farmstrong went through an establishment phase putting in place the founding partnerships and collaborative relations with key industry organisations. It also conducted extensive research with farmers to inform the programmes road map and design.

Getting Partners on Board

Getting industry partners on board is essential if you really want to make a sustainable and long-term difference. Farmstrong's partnership with rural insurer FMG has been key to sustaining success.

FMG is a mutual organisation owned by farmers and has been around for over 100 years. They insure over half of the rural sector and enjoy huge credibility with farmers. They saw Farmstrong as an opportunity to give back to the rural community by improving the wellbeing of farmers and growers.

2013

JUL: Scoping begins. **Three** workshops with **14** rural organisations.

DEC: Farmer wellbeing stakeholder group formed – **30** organisational reps meet quarterly

2014

APR: MHF and FMG become founding partners

MAY: Programme design begins – Road Map, measurement framework and brand options



FMG's contribution has been significant, including donating the talent and energy of their management and teams, providing financial resourcing and including Farmstrong messages in regular events and communications to rural communities. Expertise on the science of wellbeing is provided by the MHF and ACC advise on injury prevention.

Farmstrong also developed collaborative relationships with agricultural organisations such as Rural Support Trusts, Federated Farmers, Dairy NZ, Beef + Lamb NZ, Dairy Women's Network, NZ Young Farmers and Rural Women. These and other organisations support Farmstrong by opening up their communication channels, participating in our initiatives and promoting our call to action. By the time Farmstrong launched, over 30 organisations were on board supporting our approach.

The Importance of Research

The better we understand farmers, the more likely we are to meet their needs and change behaviours. During the establishment phase we completed qualitative interviews with 30 farming couples and an online survey of over 400 farmers. Nearly half said managing workload so they could

have time off to rest and recover was a challenge to their wellbeing. A third said managing stress and fatigue was having negative impacts. The research also established the topics that farmers said they were most interested in. These insights informed the design of the programme including the best ways to reach farmers.

Since its launch, Farmstrong has completed further research into the connection between diminished wellbeing and farmer accidents and injury. We have also researched the wellbeing of younger farmers and women in farming. The 2019 study of 500 farmers with injury claims to ACC, found 24% reported aspects of diminished wellbeing (related to having too much to do, feeling fatigued, feeling stressed, lack of sleep, feeling in need of a break) were a 'major contributor' to their injury.

This evidence base ensures Farmstrong is authentic. Right from the start it has been shaped by farmers for farmers, from its name to its logo, to the farmers who front our topics and the way they are delivered. The rural community has a genuine sense of ownership reflected through their high participation. Increasing numbers of community-driven events and initiatives in support of Farmstrong's call to action are happening.

2014

AUG: Foundation research starts with over **400** farmers

2015

3 JUNE:
FARMSTRONG
Live Well Farm Well
launches with website, Healthy thinking workshops and Fit4Farming rural cycle initiative

2016

FEB: ACC join as a strategic partner

MAR: Fit4Farming initiative completed, **1,600** participated.



Our theory of behaviour change

Our theory of change is that farmers will alter their behaviour because they see other farmers doing something that works to make them a better farmer. The face of Farmstrong is farmers who've come on board, care about improving their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the sector. They share their tips and advice for the benefit of other farmers.

Farmstrong is also cleverly positioned 'upstream'. It focuses on wellness, productivity and performance rather than illness. Farmstrong is the 'ambulance at the top of the cliff' and encourages people to act before they reach a crisis point, have an accident or injure themselves.

How Farmstrong works

Farmstrong makes behaviour change achievable for busy farmers. It encourages them to 'lock in' habits and healthy thinking strategies through:

- Farmstrong ambassador, Sam Whitelock promoting key messages, resources and attending events.
- Tailored tools and resources for farmers based on the latest wellbeing science. These are delivered via our website and face-to-face at agriculture events, workshops and educational forums.

- Farmer-to-farmer stories about what works for them distributed through rural media and social media channels.
- Organising events that help farmers stay connected and have breaks such as comedy shows, cycle tours and fitness challenges. Farmstrong is also a regular at agriculture Field Days.
- Collaborating with other rural organisations locally, regionally and nationally.

Evaluation and Measurement – how we can tell we are making a difference

Farmstrong uses the Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework to measure and track progress so we know what improvements farmers have made and how Farmstrong is contributing to this. Every year we measure farmer's behaviour change based on ten metrics around improvement in wellbeing. Our latest 2019 annual dashboard results, based on a random sample survey of 450 farm owners, found:

- 80% awareness of Farmstrong and its messages via Sam Whitelock. 23% of this is unprompted recall.
- 30% of farmers had ever participated in Farmstrong (equal to approximately 20,000 farmers and farm workers)

JUN: Sam Whitelock joins as Farmstrong Ambassador



2017

JAN-MAR: Burnout, sleep and nutrition resources produced.

JUN: Completion of **45** Healthy Thinking workshops attended by **2,718**

JUN-DEC: 5 ways to wellbeing resources at Ag events.



2018

MAY: "Turn on your core" body conditioning programme launched.

AUG: Website refreshed.



- 12% of all the farmers attributed Farmstrong with decreasing their injuries (equal to 8,300 farmers and farm workers)
- 20% of all farmers reported an improvement in one or more of ten wellbeing areas that they attributed to their involvement in Farmstrong (equal to 13,400 farmers and farm workers). As well as decreasing injury, wellbeing improvements included: ability to cope with ups and downs, sleep, fitness, balance between work and leisure, time off and connection with friends.

Key Learnings

Stay focused on your core mission, and be disciplined on where you put your time, energy and resources. Sometimes that means there are good ideas you cannot respond to.

A little bit of experimentation is good. Not spreading yourself too thin is equally important.

It's a team effort. A wide variety of skills helps – farmers, researchers, partnership builders, communicators, educators, event managers, project designers and implementers. Also finding farmer friendly experts to develop tools and resources around the specific topics

that farmers said were the most important to improve their wellbeing – sleep experts, nutritionists and psychologists.

Behaviour change takes time. Attracting and supporting farmers to share their wellbeing stories, tips and advice with other farmers has been key to making progress. You need to be realistic about the time frames and what you're expecting out of the programme.

You often haven't got all the answers at the start so you need to be prepared to learn on the way, and don't forget to regularly celebrate the progress you are making.



Find out what works for you then lock it in.

Sam Whitelock Farmstrong Ambassador

Farmstrong is a rural wellbeing programme sharing farmer-to-farmer tips and advice.

2018

SEP: Survey of over **800** women in farming completed.

2019

FEB: Survey of **900** young farmers completed.

MAY: Farmstrong finalist in NZ Health and Safety Awards Sector Leadership Category

JUL: Research on **500** farmers and wellbeing/injury link completed

AUG: Evaluation of first 4 years completed.