

# Farmers and Growers on how Farmstrong works for them



*Farmstrong is really good for New Zealand farmers  
– things have improved a lot.'*

(DAIRY FARMER)

**This research was completed by Dr Allan Wyllie (Wyllie and Associates) in November 2021.**

Thanks to the 41 farmers and growers who participated in this research for sharing their time and insights.

# Introduction

Farmstrong was publicly launched on 3 June 2015 with a mission to improve the wellbeing of people working in farming and growing so that rural New Zealand adapts and thrives in a constantly changing world. Farmstrong's call to action is "find out what works for you, then lock it in." The ways that farmers and growers participate and engage with Farmstrong include:

- attending workshops, webinars, visiting Farmstrong at Fieldays and local Ag events
- accessing resources and blogs on the Farmstrong website and via social media
- reading articles and sharing their stories via Farmstrong on radio, TV and in Farmers Weekly and other rural and farming print media.

## Background

In May/June 2021 Farmstrong carried out its seventh annual, random sample telephone survey of 450 farmers and growers to ask about changes in their wellbeing over the last 12 months. As part of the survey we also asked questions about whether they attributed improvements in their wellbeing to Farmstrong. Of those interviewed, 22% attributed some level of improvement to Farmstrong and 10% attributed at least one 'moderate' or 'large' improvement across nine wellbeing categories.

Forty-one of the farmers and growers who attributed improvements agreed to participate in follow-up phone interviews in September/October 2021 to help Farmstrong better understand how it was helping them improve their wellbeing.

This document is a summary of the key findings from the follow-up interviews completed by Dr Allan Wyllie. A more detailed report on the research is available on the Farmstrong website.

## Summary of key findings

The key finding was that the primary way Farmstrong impacts farmers and growers is through repeated exposure to its key messages. Alongside this, the research confirmed Farmstrong's brand, stories and resources resonate strongly with farmers and that they value the content.

The research also revealed Farmstrong enjoys 'word-of-mouth' endorsement from farmers. Thirty-seven percent of farmers had, at some point, recommended Farmstrong to others, mostly to one or two other people. The rate of recommendation was even higher for women (55%) and beef/lamb farmers (48%).

What follows are interview excerpts which illustrate why and how Farmstrong works from the point of view of farmers and growers.



## Repeated exposure to the key messages

Most farmers reported that Farmstrong's impact was cumulative - repeated exposure to key messages across various media and at events was the main way they felt encouraged to improve their wellbeing.

*'Every time I hear something about Farmstrong, I'm thinking a bit more differently' (male arable farmer).*

*'It's kind of everywhere, which is kind of cool... articles that pop up without having to look for it.' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'It's about someone chipping away, saying you need to do that.' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'When you have ideas reinforced, it helps you gravitate in a certain direction.' (male dairy farmer).*

Farmstrong ambassador and rugby great Sam Whitelock is also a powerful influence.

*'I always read his [Sam] articles and think what he is saying is bang on.... I identify the areas I need to address.... Fairly common themes – four or five points that make a big difference... they are emphasised on a regular basis ... It's good - it inculcates it into your thinking' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

Some farmers recalled a specific moment or event which made them decide to take action. One farmer, who participated in a 'Dr Tom' Farmstrong workshop some years ago, commented: *'I see it [Farmstrong] from time to time and it jogs my memory of doing the course ... I still remember a lot from doing that.'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

The accessibility of information was also a factor for some. One noted that by providing the *'frequent reminders'*, if there was some timing that suited her better, she *'made the effort to do it then'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

The importance of constant reinforcement of message came through strongly in many interviews. *'It's good seeing it so regularly in different media – it's quite powerful.'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

Another farmer, commenting in relation to taking notice of the small things that bring pleasure, observed: *'I probably know it already, but it [Farmstrong] reminds you.'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

A few farmers specifically noted that once they had become familiar with the value of Farmstrong, they now regularly read the articles. One commented: *'Traditionally I would have flicked past – I'm a skimmer. I now make a point of reading it and taking in what they have to say.'* (male dairy farmer).

The overall impact on farmers' wellbeing was summed up by this comment: *'It provides more clarity in dealing with problems... makes you more aware to do things you knew about ... it prompts you... and it gives you confidence to do them.'* (male beef and forestry farmer).



## Creating 'light bulb' moments

A few farmers reported specific communications or occasions when Farmstrong led to change. For one it was an article that stimulated discussion with his two sons and they *'came to the collective decision that we all needed to take more time and be more appreciative of the environment and be more aware of small things'*.

He had also read a Farmstrong article about doing something he had never done before and as a result of this article: *'I took my wife all around the North Island on a motorbike... I pushed myself into extending my normal boundaries... I had to convince my wife... It was a lot of fun,'* (male bee keeper).

One farmer had read a Farmstrong article that mentioned breathing and she *'tried it and it really helps'* (female beef/sheep farmer).

A female contract milker had attended a Farmstrong talk at a dairy leader forum where they worked in groups to identify the things that are important to you and that you need to make time for. For her it was *'hanging out with my friends more'*. She noted that she already had a great group of friends, but the session *'cemented the things that needed to be important to me'*.

Another had a daughter whose group had done a school project on depression and raised money for Farmstrong as part of this. It was her telling him about Farmstrong that got him to have a look at the Farmstrong website (male beef/lamb farmer).

The Farmstrong brand itself is a strong motivator for some. One reported the greatest impact from a Farmstrong magnet on their fridge. *'As I go to get something it makes me stop and think about doing more [of what Farmstrong promotes]. It makes me remember that things may not be as bad as I thought.'* (male sharemilker).



## Telling powerful, authentic stories

Authentic, first-hand stories of challenge and change from farmers and growers have been at the heart of the programme's success. Farmers and growers report that these stories are a key contributor to the messages landing with them.

*'I'm reading some of the articles and thinking, 'this is what I'm going through'. By reading someone else's experience, it helps.'* (female beef/sheep farmer).

*'Hearing stories of what farmers have been through - you realise you've been like that sometimes.'* (male dairy farmer).

A farmer, who had severe depression twice, noted how Farmstrong made him more aware that others have been through similar things. It made him feel a lot better knowing that – he felt less shame. He cited an article he had just read of a farmer who was doing cows' hooves and just felt he couldn't carry on. This resonated so strongly with him that he *'just about choked up... brilliant, taking some of the guilt away, I just take my hat off to everyone involved in Farmstrong.'* (male beef/lamb and dairy grazing farmer). He added later in the interview that if Farmstrong had been around before he 'crashed', he might have taken more measures to deal with it.



## Positive, practical and inspiring

Farmers who reported wellbeing improvements due to Farmstrong clearly perceived Farmstrong communications as providing important messages and useful strategies for addressing their wellbeing. The value was sometimes linked to the perception that Farmstrong was providing a positive voice, when so much was negative and difficult for farmers.

*'Farmstrong is a good, inspirational thing, so I've tried to do more [of what Farmstrong is promoting]... The whole premise of focusing on mental health and all the rest of it. Overall farmers are very disconnected.... [Once you have] more awareness that everyone is sort of struggling... you don't feel so bad... the fact that it's a bit more talked about... People get broken when they think they're not normal... you can feel very isolated... if you feel it's a weakness rather than just par for the course... being able to step back a bit is important.'* (male dairy farmer).

*'Farmstrong has brought issues farmers are dealing with out in the open more... talking about it... you're not the only one feeling sometimes depressed and pissed off with everything'* (male dairy farmer). He felt it was *'absolutely helpful'*.

*'Farmstrong definitely makes people more self-aware of where they're at – their own headspace... looking inwardly a bit more.'* (female beef/lamb).

One farmer noted that Farmstrong gives people options: *'Farmstrong has an overarching umbrella – you can cherry pick'* (male beef/lamb farmer). He felt more supported knowing Farmstrong was there and that he could tell others that help is there.



## Reminded me to stay in contact with my friends

In the interviews farmers and growers often talked about communicating more with neighbours and others in their community, not just their friends, as a result of Farmstrong.

A frequent message they were attributing to Farmstrong was to have more focus on keeping an eye on your neighbours and *'being more there for them'* (male dairy farmer). One farmer commented: *'I communicate with anyone I'm worried about... make time to catch up with them'*. He cited the example of young farmer who he noticed *'looked terrible'* so he rang him and his neighbours that night. Three weeks later this young farmer thanked him, when he was feeling a lot better (male beef/lamb farmer).

One who mentioned Farmstrong's latest campaign, 'you matter, let's natter', noted that *'farmers can be quite isolated and so busy'*. As an example of the impact from Farmstrong, he reported that twice in the last week he had pulled up on the road and talked with other farmers, whereas he would *'never have done this previously'* (male dairy farmer).

Another commented that he was having: *'A bit more conversation on how people are coping and what's on their minds'*. This same person also noted that: *'All my neighbours want to come down to help me dock – this probably wouldn't have happened before people were so aware of others' wellbeing'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

*'Ringing friends more, seeing them more than in the past. Making the effort when you wouldn't have in the past'* (male dairy farmer).

*'There is more communication now. You know that when things get tough you can talk to each other'* (male dairy farmer). He acknowledged *'definitely doing more of this'* and felt that it was *'partly a result of Farmstrong'*. He reported having a very good friend who was struggling with depression and he *'checks in on him all the time'*.



## Starting conversations

Some thought Farmstrong was contributing to a greater willingness for farmers, particularly men, to talk about their problems: *'People are more prepared to talk about their problems now... men talking openly; they are finding it not as hard to talk about these things.... I think Farmstrong has done a good job' (female beef/sheep farmer).*

One farmer, who was going through a marital break-up watched the Farmstrong website *and 'realised the need to reach out'*. She noted that on the farm it's so easy to *'just carry on'*. She tries to get off the farm and spend more time with friends, but has variable success *'particularly at this time of the year' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

One, who now takes time out to text and talk to his friends and family to find out how they are, commented that he was never quite sure if it was for them or him. He later added that he does get isolated and he now makes sure that: *'I chew the fat when I see neighbours on their farm... It's important for people doing it hard to know they are not out there by themselves – that others have similar problems' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

One mentioned the challenge of *'remembering to do it [connect with friends]'* and would sometimes make herself do it at the time, *'even though I'm not 100% organised for it' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'Stop and chat more often. I realise it's a two way thing – sometimes for myself and sometimes because I wonder how others are' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

A common message mentioned in relation to Farmstrong was that it was a genuine mood boost: *'Makes you think that it's not all that bad – maybe someone is worse off than you are' (male sharemilker).* This often got mentioned in relation to 'level of contact with friends', but also in other parts of the interview.



## Encouraged me to get fitter

Although one of the wives had initiated an on-farm one hour session over the summer with a trainer, it took reading Farmstrong six months later for the farmer who was interviewed to decide that *'this was probably a good thing to do'*. He reported that it had *'helped out quite a lot. It helps mentally knowing you can do the exercises – I could hardly do sit-ups at the beginning'* (male dairy farmer).

A farmer, who was very aware from Farmstrong of the importance of being farm fit, went to a local heated pool for swimming and also did yoga and meditation. If she had a day in the office, she normally went for a walk. She was *'aware that my mental health is better when I do exercise'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

Taking on the Farmstrong message that being farm fit is good, one farmer had a goal of finding a yoga class this year. He had been unable to find the time last year due to a labour shortage (male dairy farmer).

Another farmer, who was already fit and very active, still found *'the detail from Farmstrong on the type of exercise was useful'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

*'The importance of retaining muscle mass and staying strong as you get older'* was a specific message that one farmer had taken from *'Sam's messages'* (female beef/lamb farmer).





## Motivated me to contribute to other farmers and my community

A farmer who ran the local farm discussion group noted that Farmstrong *'keeps me motivated [to run the group]... even just seeing the Farmstrong logo reminds me to organise events'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

One felt Farmstrong had contributed in his getting involved in a local group on the *'Three Waters challenge'*, whereas in the past he *'probably wouldn't have bothered'* (male dairy farmer). He felt a *'bit empowered'* that they were speaking up. This same person had been part of an initiative to restart the local Federated Farmers branch, based on a new concept of being fifty percent social, involving families and wives. He noted that Farmstrong was discussed as a reason to do this.

One farmer, who had been through difficult times, found that helping others in similar circumstances had *'helped me get over it'* (male beef and chicken farmer).

Another noted that *'focusing more on community stuff takes your mind away from farming – it does do you a lot of good'* (male dairy farmer).

A farmer, who took a load of hay to a friend experiencing drought in another region, *'got just as much buzz out of feeling like I helped'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

Another, who felt that *'overall farmers are very disconnected'* was aware that this is one of the things Farmstrong is addressing. He reported that during covid little groups of them have been *'having small picnics in the pine trees'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

Another commented that checking out how people are, extended to those living in rural communities who weren't farmers, such as the person renting the house down the road (male beef and forestry farmer).



## Helped me take more notice of the small things in life

While there were the expected comments relating to taking more notice of nature there were also other more unexpected things that farmers said they were taking more notice of and making changes to.

One example was better communication with his children (teens and older): *'Being conscious of the kids... communicating with them better... talking about the farm, so it's not all on one person's shoulders' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

Another example was: *'Take some time to have a think. Instead of just focussing on the big things going wrong, focus on what small things are wins' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

For one it was: *'Not worrying about a lot of the stuff that I would have in the past – not sweat the small stuff' (male dairy farmer).*

Another commented: *'It highlighted that balance is important and variation in what you do. It's good for the headspace if you've got a change of scene that is maybe not financially or responsibility driven... just chose to do it' (female beef/sheep farmer).*

*'If you're mindful of the small things, having the next and best thing is not so important'. This way of thinking had changed this farmers family's way of thinking about retirement and succession planning: 'The days when you took on large debt and worked seven days to reduce it... discussion on does it have to be this way... quality of life is important' (male bee keeper).*

For one farmer taking notice of the small things related to *'watching my kids more – they're not going to be there for ever.'* He linked this to *'the Farmstrong interviews on Facebook... Makes you realise you need to spend more time with them' (male dairy farmer).*

*'Taking time out and realising personal health and wellbeing are very important. If you get too stressed you're not helping yourself or others around you'. This farmer later mentioned: 'Taking time out to feel better – it only has to be a moment, such as a walk around the garden'. She had also found it very helpful 'learning to say No to some things - acknowledging you can't do everything' (55-64 year old female beef/sheep farmer).*

*'I'll now stop and look at the sunsets, sunrise, cloud formations – sun rays coming through. Focus more on the positive things around us. Spring time is a sign of new life – ducklings, the cherry blossom is fantastic – taking notice of nature' (male dairy farmer).* He suggested that Farmstrong could *'push more'* that *'some times of the year it's almost a privilege to be on the land'*, but he added that it needs to be promoted at times *'when you're not so under the pump that you don't have time to stop and notice'.*

*'Being more mindful big time – being aware of nature and what's going on. Taking the time to focus on the small things'. This farmer gave the example of watching a chicken and its egg with her child and added that 'a lot of stuff can wait till the next day' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'Watching dogs being idiots with each other, watching how kids interact with friends... walking around the farm and really looking at the cattle, looking at what's in the grass' (male beef and chicken farmer).*

*'Aware to take time to take a few deep breaths' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

One noted that following Farmstrong's 'encouragement', he was 'just noticing more things'. He felt that as a result of Farmstrong he was 'more easy going' and doesn't 'worry too much these days' (male dairy farmer).

A farmer, who now had to work less on the farm and was spending more time helping his wife in the garden, felt that 'it helps both of us in our relationship', noting that Farmstrong has 'pointed out that the little things do matter' (male dairy farmer).

Another thinks a bit more about looking after himself. 'It's still a terrific industry to be in – but you can forget to enjoy it' (male beef/lamb farmer).



## Learning new things to keep fresh

*'[Farmstrong is] making you aware that not everything is about farming... having hobbies and other things not directly related to farming... take your mind off the daily grind... I'm learning quite a lot about nutrition and also learning knitting'. She also reported having 'got into a bit of regenerative agriculture ... meeting a whole lot of new people... quite exciting' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'Learning new things is a very big part of it – to extend things a bit, rather than stand still'. This farmer said he was 'embarking on all sorts of things here and it creates more interest and challenge'. He felt that managing anxiety was important; that it was a natural part of taking on new challenges: 'You should feel a bit of something firing in you, but learning not to bite off too much, so that you can get to the reward.' He also commented that 'by helping yourself, you can help others as well' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

A farmer, who was very busy running a farm on her own, had still enrolled in a Te Reo course and 'pushed the comfort level – it keeps the mind fresh, it challenges the mind-set' (female beef/lamb farmer).

One farmer had taken up a Massey course to assist him with succession planning, but had to stop it due to a labour shortage (male dairy farmer). Another was learning French because of Farmstrong - he wants to work in France one day. He saw 'picking up new things' as 'being part of an awareness that farming is not everything - there is life outside of it' (male beef/lamb farmer).

*'Good to be open to new ideas... it can sometimes make things easier.... It's quite nice getting ideas off others – it's easy to get into a totally independent groove' (female beef/sheep farmer).*



## Has helped with my sleep

Those who attributed Farmstrong with improving their amount and quality of sleep also reported an increased awareness of the importance of getting enough sleep. *'It's helped me realise how important sleep is. I used to pride myself with getting four to five hours sleep a night, but I now realise [from Farmstrong and other sources] it's not healthy' (male dairy farmer).*

One farmer, who was aware from Farmstrong that eight hours sleep is critical, reported that if she had to *'get up at night for a possum'*, she *'might change the alarm'*; she wouldn't have done that previously. She was also more mindful during the day if she had not had enough sleep and tried *'not to react to things'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

A couple commented on liking the *'Sam sleep ads'*. One noted that *'sleep is a hot topic within health and wellbeing at the moment'* (female beef/lamb farmer).



## Taking more time away from the farm

One woman, running the farm by herself, recognised from Farmstrong that getting time off the farm was a big problem for her, *'but there was quite a simple solution'*. *'If you're not aware of it, you don't realise it. It's not until you do it that you realise how good it is'*. She now tries to get off the farm once a week and reports she *'comes back more refreshed and energised. If you stay on the farm you always see everything that needs doing, everything that's falling apart'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

*'[Farmstrong] says get away and think about something else. I've tried it and been away a few times – it's really good'* (male dairy farmer).

*'Realising you need time away from the farm. You can get stuck in a rut. The same applies for staff – making silly mistakes due to tiredness.... I either give them an hour off, or try to give them one to two days off'* (male dairy farmer).

One farmer, who reported that *'Farmstrong has made me more aware of how vital it is to take breaks'*, reported having organised someone to look after the farm at Christmas, noting *'this is rare'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

Another felt that the message from Farmstrong, coupled with pressure from his wife and mother and mates had resulted in *'a little bit of improvement'* (male beef/lamb farmer). He had spent 10 days sailing with a friend last summer and had never done that before.

*'Farmstrong makes you feel you can go away – it does feel good when you come back [having had the break]'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

Another, who was *'making a point of it [getting away from the farm]'* due to Farmstrong, reported that it *'had a very positive impact'* (male dairy grazing).

One farmer who felt they were being more successful at getting time away, being aware of how important it is, commented: *'I just realised today that we should record the days we have away'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

For some, the improvement in this was linked to their getting older, moving into retirement and having others taking over some of their work, so they are having to spend less time working on the farm.



## Better balance between my work and leisure

Achieving a decent balance between work and leisure can be challenging on a farm, as most farmers live where they work and the nature of the work is ongoing. This research showed Farmstrong is encouraging more farmers to reassess how they manage their time.

*'Understanding that family comes first and making time for them...being aware of what they go through – farmers can be difficult to live with' [this farmer was clear that Farmstrong had made him aware of this]* (male dairy farmer).

*'Even with the kids I try not to always talk farm at the dinner table'. When this farmer goes for a walk she is 'clear that the walk is for leisure, not mustering'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

*'Getting away from the farm and balancing life out made a real difference. Hunting, sport with the kids – it's been really good'* (male dairy farmer).

*'Taking a look at life and where you want to head... Taking time out and doing these things'* (male dairy farmer).

*'I often finish early now – don't try and cram everything into one day'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

*'I used to feel guilty if I was away doing something else, but I now realise it will still be there when I go home.... enjoying what I'm doing a lot more'* (female beef/sheep farmer).

One farmer had structured his work so he spent three days on one farm and two on the other, but had two days to spend with his family in weekends when his son came home from boarding school (male beef/lamb farmer).

Another noted that if his wife and family wanted to do something, he would now do it, whereas he wouldn't before (male beef/lamb farmer).



## Coping better with the ups and downs of farming

If farmers had already talked about ways in which Farmstrong was contributing to improvements in other areas, they often noted that the combined impacts of these were contributing to their 'ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming'. As shown from the farmer comments below, there was a strong focus on strategies to cope with difficult times.

*'You can lose sight of it in the heat of the moment. The general feeling [from Farmstrong] is that there's another day - you can't do everything – you've just got to accept that' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

*'It's been a bit of a moderate year and I try and think about what I've read and suck it up and think another year's coming next year, or another day or week is coming' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

One farmer reported having taken several lessons from Farmstrong: *'Say shit, what happened, how do I deal with this and come up with a plan' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

*'You've got to control the controllables – there's a lot of stuff you can't control... Farmstrong makes you think along these lines – it puts perspective on the reality of what you can control' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

One farmer used the term *'not sweat the big stuff'* in relation to not spending time trying to deal with the big things that feel beyond your control, but to focus on things which you feel you can have some control over. *'General awareness not to sweat the big stuff so much, to be able to feel that things will come right... I'm now able to put it to one side at night and when I'm off the farm... Even on the farm I have processes to break it down to smaller time periods to focus on .... I feel more in control' (male beef/lamb farmer).*

*'You can't let things build up – there's a lot of things out of your control. Doing other things takes your mind off. Mentally are a lot better off for it' (male dairy farmer).*

Some talked about improvement in dealing with stressful situations. One farmer felt that: *'The contribution of a whole lot of little things have improved our resilience'.* More specifically he noted: *'We do it much better now [as a family] ... at the end of each day we look at the positives – things we're thankful for... we automatically get into the habit of looking at things positively'.* He also later mentioned that they were *'identifying our values and working to satisfy these' (under 45 year old male beef/lamb farmer).* He thought the source of having a focus on positives may have been a pamphlet Farmstrong gave out at a Federated Farmers conference or AGM.

*'Makes me think about what I am doing to keep myself in a good place... I often think I need to stop and enjoy that moment... I keep thinking of the five things I should be doing to keep myself well – the 5 speech bubbles [from Farmstrong]' (female beef/lamb farmer).* She also mentioned addressing *'where you spend your time thinking – the focus of your thinking'.*

One farmer who reported a 'small' improvement in 'mental resilience' due to Farmstrong noted that: *'Farmstrong reinforces that the whole package helps to build your confidence that you will be stronger and better. The farm is not going to fall apart if you take a day off'* (male dairy farmer).

Another, who also worked with the Regional Support Trust, felt that both that and Farmstrong had a key role: *'So farmers understand and have their stories told... farmers understand they're not on their own'* (female dairy farmer).



## How farmers hear about Farmstrong

Farmers Weekly (print and digital version) was a key source, with almost all the farmers mentioning it. Many mentioned it by name but others just said it was a 'farming magazine', or some similar description. Several farmers said they looked through most of the publication.

Radio was another key information source. There was some mention of 'The Country' radio programme with Jamie Mackay. One commented that: *'He's always talking about Farmstrong – he often has someone on talking about it'* (male beef/lamb farmer).

Several farmers mentioned that having Sam featuring in communications assisted in drawing attention to them. One commented: *'I don't know how strong Farmstrong would be without Sam – I've got a lot of respect for him – he's a natural leader... If his photo wasn't with the article I might not even look at it'* (male winegrower). *'Sam being the front man is a master-stroke – he draws a lot in'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

One perceived that *'Farmstrong has cranked up its efforts over the last two years – farmers are under a lot of pressure'* (male dairy farmer).

A few mentioned keeping pamphlets that contained useful information.

One woman specifically mentioned the logo as identifying Farmstrong material: *'Regularly seeing the logo in various bits and pieces that float around'* (female beef/lamb farmer).

Although those interviewed were not high users of the Farmstrong website, one farmer who had previously looked at the website, went back and *'looked at it properly'* after *'three months of hell, to see how it could assist... I thought it was time to start reaching out'* (male beef and chicken farmer).

Another reported having *'looked it up when I was feeling really bad... it was helpful'* (female beef/sheep farmer).

One reported reading *'everything Farmstrong had online'* as part of a project he was doing for Young Farmers about mental health. In work he does with the Rural Support Trust he sees *'a lot of the young ones struggling more... they've not got the back-up or lifetime experience'* (male dairy farmer).

# Farmstrong's role in relation to other organisations

Given other organisations and initiatives are also contributing to farmer wellbeing, questions were asked to identify awareness of these and the perceived role of Farmstrong in relation to them. Quite a few could not name any other organisations or initiatives. The most mentioned was Rural Support Trust. Those who did mention others, tended to think that Farmstrong was taking the leading role. A few mentioned that Farmstrong was taking a leading role in the area it was dealing with and Rural Support Trust was taking a leading role in other ways. A few also, who had a stronger interest in their health and wellbeing, mentioned that Farmstrong is reinforcing messages they are obtaining from other sources beyond farming.

One farmer had a period of being in 'a bad place' and had received support from several organisations, but despite these other inputs, she was very clear about the key role Farmstrong had played and was grateful Farmstrong was there. *'Farmstrong gives you the tools to work your way through it – you can get through it' (female beef/lamb farmer).*

## Interest in and understanding of Farmstrong

To try and get some sort of sense of what sort of emotional connection people feel with Farmstrong, they were asked to rate how interested they were in hearing about things from Farmstrong, where a rating of 10 is 'really enthusiastic' and 0 is 'having no interest at all'. For all 41 farmers and growers, the mean and median rating was 7, with 27% giving a rating of 9 or 10. There were higher levels for beef/lamb than dairy, with females also being higher than males.

Most of those interviewed had an accurate perception of the goals of Farmstrong, with a focus on enhancing farmer wellbeing and resilience and helping them cope with stress. Some mentioned preventing suicide and, to a lesser extent, depression, but they also often mentioned the wellbeing focus as well.

