

KEEPING IT LOCAL

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Martin Jones and David Ward

Bale wrapping with the SAME 110 above the Tutakuri River



Agricultural contracting goes hand in hand with being part of the local community. The families behind Kaweka Contracting Ltd are not only contractors for many of the local farmers but are also farmers themselves. And the bulk of their machinery is purchased and serviced by another local business.

The team at Kaweka Contracting focuses on cultivating the land in the Waiwhare district and that's served them well for the past 22 years. Business owners David Ward and Martin Jones fit their contracting business around their farming operations. Because the bulk of their clients come from farms nearby, they are also able to keep a finger on the pulse of their own properties.

The territory in which they operate is roughly located between the Ngaruroro and the Tutakuri Rivers.

Martin leases a 270-hectare farm with winter trade lambs and cattle finishing.

"I used to have breeding ewes as well but the contracting business became so busy I decided to focus on the winter trade instead," Martin says. "This frees me up for when I need it and as we now have a couple of guys driving for us, it takes the pressure off."

David's son-in-law, Campbell Bremner, now manages his family farm of 350 hectares with 150 bulls and 180 cows. This allows him to step back from the day-to-day running and focus on his contracting partnership. The Waiwhare region, west of Hastings, is known

for its lush rolling hills and pastures. With higher than average rainfall for the region, it's renowned as a cattle and sheep breeding and finishing country.

Small beginnings

David, who has lived in the district all his life, is a second-generation farmer and has been involved with hay baling since the 1970s. It wasn't until he joined forces with Martin in 1996 that their current business began.

"A farmer down the road got someone up from town to do big square bales, but his machine broke down and the contractor left them to it," David says.

"So we bought a round baler to complete the job. We bought more machinery, then we found we needed something to do in the off-season so began direct drilling crops and it's grown from there."

What's in the shed

Kaweka Contracting has two Deutz (6190 and M620) and two SAME (110 and Silver 110) tractors, a McHale bale wrapper and baler, a Kverneland rake and tedder, a Fencopro rammer, and a Duncan

Renovator seed drill. "We've sown barley with the renovator and it went well and we got good yields," David says.

"The Duncan Renovator is robust and has disc openers at the front that allow it to handle a variety of terrain. When we first started direct drilling, it was new to the area and people were a bit sceptical but now they can see how efficient it is," Martin adds.

They have a Taege roller with APV Air Seeder so they can broadcast clover, plantain, or chicory or slug bait.

"We can do three jobs with this: we're sowing grass seed with the drill, fertiliser is applied, too, and the air seeder broadcasts



Baling lucerne with McHale round baler and the Deutz 6190



McHale round baler and the Deutz 6190 in action

clover," Martin says. "Most of our gear is pretty new. You have to keep updating; if you don't, you fall behind quickly because technology is changing all time. We cannot afford to have breakdowns, especially with the balers.

"We bought a new one this year. There was nothing much wrong with our old one but it had a few bales on it, so we got a good deal and bought a new one. I think we did the right thing."

David and Martin have always dealt with Power Farming in Hawke's Bay for all their machinery requirements. Dealing with a one-stop shop means there is no delay in the rare case of a machinery failure. David says, "If we have transmission or any other

SAME 140 with Kverneland Swapher in lucerne paddock

The Duncan Renovator is robust and has disc openers at the front that allow it to handle a variety of terrain





David, Martin, and driver, Gavin Sparkes

problems, they loan us a tractor to get us going. They really go out of their way to help. If you form a long-term relationship with a company, that's what you get. If you go here there and everywhere, you may get a better deal, but at the end of the day, it's more about having that trusted connection."

A few winters ago, a severe snowstorm downed trees and with forest roads needing to be cleared, David and Martin swung into action with their tractor with a reach mower attachment to help clear the debris. They also use it to do roadside mowing jobs when required.

Seasonal variety

Crops of rape, kale, chicory, plantain, and oats are sown in spring and autumn. Tractor work begins from August to early September and after that, it's busy through to the end of April.

"This last season made it difficult to do anything, so we worked when the weather allowed. The payback was that crops produced heavier yields and the season went on a lot longer," David says.

"However, it was near impossible to make hay. We only do a small amount for ourselves and we weren't getting windows of opportunity to do it, especially up here; we get lots of overcast days where there's no drying,



The SAME 140 with Taupo Hand attachment clears forestry tracks after a snow storm.

yet down a bit further towards Hastings, it's different. Winter 2017 was very wet, too, and we couldn't get onto paddocks. Then it turned around and jammed everything up."

When asked if the seasons had changed a lot in the time he'd been working here, he says, "I don't think there's much difference to 20-30 years ago in spite of the technology in forecasting that's now available. The

biggest thing is the efficiency of modern machinery, which enables us to fit work into a narrower window."

David and Martin firmly believe a minimal amount of cultivation is a key factor in their operation.

"We tend not to push that side of it too much. Often, we'll direct drill a crop of oats, then come spring, all we need to do is one

pass with the cultivator and it's ready to drill again. It means we're not having to disc or power harrow the ground."

A recent change they've made is to sow grasses without spraying a paddock that's been run out.

David explains that it's a more economical way of getting grass up in the paddocks.

"We sow short rotation tetraploid grasses, which are vigorous growers that suit under-sowing with the direct drill. If it's sown in autumn and you get good conditions that grass will fire up in spring. It competes with what's already there. Then it's already established by spring, as opposed to putting it in spring when everything else is firing off."

Professional relationships

Kaweka Contracting has always belonged to Rural Contractor's New Zealand (RCNZ).

"Belonging to a professional association such as this is really important; it's like being a member of Federated Farmers," Martin says.

"They keep us informed with rural changes such as oversized loads. A couple of ours are oversized, so all the measurements are readily available on their website, and if there's any



Drilling grass and broadcasting with APV air seeder on roller

change, they e-mail you with what's going on so you know immediately. If they don't think something is right, they will lobby on behalf of the contractors."

Martin and David's wives, Shona and Linda, are an integral part of the combined

operations, too. "Shona runs the farm. I'd be hamstrung if I didn't have her," Martin says, "while Linda manages the accounts." ■

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Time for a bit of maintenance before tackling the next paddock



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