

## **Gone in Seconds**

### **How stable is your income, Success Profits from a safe Environment**

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Can you guarantee your future? – How you can “Better the odds”.

Bettering the odds is done by gathering information and then acting in the best way you know how.

When you have never experienced this action before, our skill level is challenged.

Be it fencing, feed budgeting or even learning to put the milking cups on a cow, we learn best by going through the experience.

There are three ways of learning. Firstly by watching someone else, secondly by hearing or listening how to complete the task and thirdly is by doing the task yourself.

“You learn best by your own mistakes son” is true enough as long as any injury event incurred is not too severe. In some cases it has been fatal.

We want you all to learn by both reading about ways to “better the odds”, and listening to others tell their story and learn from their experiences.

### **Introducing our First speaker, David and Heather Michaels.**

Both David and Heather would like to share the unfortunate story of how David had an accident with a 1200kg Bull and how that has shaped their lives since.

#### **(As presented by David)**

October 24<sup>th</sup> 1999 is a day that changed both our lives.

I was out on the farm, Labour weekend, changing sire bulls between mobs when things went dreadfully wrong.

I had 2 bulls, each destined for a separate mob (single sire mating) both mobs were in paddocks that were side by side off the end of a bridge. I successfully got the first bull into the right paddock, number 2 bull followed behind coming up to the gate onto the bridge. When he saw the other bull join his harem he got a little agitated, as he thought he was going to miss out. The bull started to climb over the gate, I managed to convince the 1200kg bull to stay on the other side of the gate and tried to calmly negotiate him back down the lane a little in hope of giving myself enough time to return to the gates and switch them around so that number 2 bull could continue on his way to his herd of cows.

As I turned to return to the gates the bull took my movements as a sign of retreat and charged at me hitting me in the thigh and throwing me some distance onto wooded rails breaking numerous ribs and large blow to the head, knocking me unconscious.

I came too, urged on by my old faithful dog pawing at my shoulder and surrounded by the rest of the faithful Canine team.

Badly knocked about I managed to crawl to my 4 wheeler and headed to the closest neighbour as my wife Heather was visiting family down south.

This story is similar to many of those unfortunate farmers that have come to grief while working in their business. Working alone and sometimes in remote areas along way from help is common.

We would like to share our story with others so that others can learn from our mistakes and hopefully they too don't go thru the aftermath of such an accident also.

Running a 650acre intensive sheep and beef breeding and finishing unit with the help of one part time staff member was very full on for us. I feel I was a dedicated farmer who pushed myself to achieve best possible performance and enjoyed the camaraderie of other farmers who shared performance figures and knowledge on how they achieved their results at many discussion group meetings.

Our 3 children back then where following their own careers, while Heather was back enjoying her role as a nurse, 47km from the farm. Heather's income provided extra for the partnership as well.

I describe myself as conscientious and not a risk taker but believe, "the more often you do something the greater the odds are against you, and that something could go wrong".

In my case letting my guard down and doing a job I should have left until the next day when the shepherd was available to help, or possibly I could have mustered all the mobs, up to 250 head and brought them into the yards.

The result is that I now have 53% disability and suffer from lack of co-ordination, balance, fatigue, emotionally sensitive and headaches that drugs have no effect on, are what I live with each day.

In simple terms I have found I lacked what is vital for all management practises both on the farm and other. Number one is "observation" which is the crucial first step to farm management decision making. With out this correct "observation ability" the following steps of analysis, decision and action are totally impossible.

In the aftermath I returned back to the farm with only limited mental and physical ability but still with the strong will that many of us males inherit.

I wanted to prove that I could run the farm as well as I did prior to the accident. I have found myself having trouble calculating simple equations like pre and post pasture covers and struggled to estimate animal live weights, both tasks I could do at a glance previously.

Mistakes began to happen, run away tractor while spraying gorse was one of the most frightening things to happen.

I am lucky to have a loving relationship and am gifted to have a wife like Heather that has stood beside me through it all.

**(As presented by Heather)**

The call on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1999 to say David has been injured is frightful enough.

After that I accompanied David to endless visits to doctors and 5 major operations, spending endless hours by hospital beds, this time as a wife in stead of an occupation.

Dealing with David's anguish and frustration was hard for all the family as prior to the accident David was placid and had good self control. The family had to watch as David; the then head of the house now need endless help and support

Once David was mobile and I felt safe to leave him on his own, I returned to my nursing, a release from home stress and an income to help the farm.

On my return each night I would ask how David's day went, his reply was always hazy and much of what David did in the morning was forgotten.

With little improvement, we both queried the specialists on David's progress. Numerous visits to doctors and specialists discovered very little and 6 weeks after initial attack David suffered a brain haemorrhage from internal bleeding on one side of the brain, all resulting from the bull attack. David also suffered a second brain haemorrhage 6 weeks after the first, this time on the opposite side of the brain to the first.

We sold the farm back in 2002. Life today has seen us both move to the Deep South to be closer to our eldest son and family and be of help where ever possible.

David enjoys tackling jobs around the house and we are both proud of our garden.

Retirement is very restricted.

Motion sickness limits David wanting to travel to far and also restricts any enjoyment that he once got from being out on the open water, boating.

Horses also played big part in David's life; his passion for hunting horses is but a distant memory. Socially David struggles to meet people, something he had little trouble with prior to the accident, not to mention the abstinence from alcohol now before the enjoyment of a thirst quenching beer or a good quality scotch whiskey with a good friend while solving the worlds problems are now replaced with a glass of water or orange juice.

I am like many farmer wives that are married to husbands that are Kings of their own kingdoms (farm), they know best and that's the way we do things and nobody is going to tell them how to do it differently.

**(As presented by Ant)**

**Second speaker is Shirlene Cochrane**, also Regional Co-ordinator for FarmSafe but is also dairy farming in partnership with husband David at Peel Forest just out of Geraldine. Both also won the New Zealand Dairy managers of the year in 2006.

Shirlene openly discuss how they have developed the culture on their farm and also the benefits from that change.

**(As presented by Shirlene)**

I love the land and farming, I am preparing my calf sheds at present and getting very excited but I am also passionate about changing the culture on farms and in particular Dairy farms.

I would like to talk to you briefly today about some of the changes we have made and the benefits, because without scratching the surface it is hard to see "Success Profits from a safe Environment" but they are there!

Years ago I was doing a diploma in Agriculture, and Health and Safety came up as extra credits. I thought this was my opportunity to get it done, get it out of the way and if the Department of Labour (DOL) ever came I would be all sorted. My husband and I go to a lot of trouble to avoid the possibility of an accident and some of these are below.

***Some of the changes we have made on farm:***

We have an orientation checklist that covers off all areas of what our staff need to know about the job. Included in that is a substantial part related to health and safety. What we are really talking about is getting people off to a good start and **setting a standard**. We do a training needs analysis so we know what training our staff lack to do the job safely.

We then plan training, so each staff member has a training schedule for the year. Every staff member on the farm is trained in first aid.

We have a lengthy induction process that shows them how jobs need to be done, for many reasons, efficiency for one, but also because this is the safest way to do it.

We have been successfully\_wearing helmets (for 7 years now) and have speed limits in place. 20km built up areas and 30km max over the whole farm.

All our hazards are identified on a farm map and hazard register to make sure staff, family, visitors and contractors are advised of these hazards.

Everyone that comes onto the farm goes through a tick list of hazards, receives a map and then signs to say they understand the processes on farm.

We have a maintenance day every Friday and when a staff member finishes the job whether it be bike, tractor, or effluent spreader they record it in a notebook and sign off job complete.

Every staff member contributes to the fortnightly staff meeting including Health and Safety issues.

**So again we are going to a lot of trouble to avoid the possibility of an accident or incident**

It sounds all about compliance doesn't it? But actually **an interesting thing happened**; the biggest thing that changed was the culture on the farm. We became a team!! People started acting differently. We had an increase in efficiency in the team of about 20% which was a real surprise to us. For us it has been very rewarding as employers.

#### Action vs. Outcome

- Orientation – High standard was set as we took time to talk farm policies. Vehicle policy, smoking policy etc.
- Training needs analysis – buy in from them because they could see we cared about their safety and what they wanted to learn.
- Induction- We didn't have to check up on people (huge time savings and efficiency)
- Hazard identification- The team started to look out for each other and report things broken.
- Maintenance day – Staff started to look after vehicles and machinery better

When I first thought about Health and Safety it was very scary because I thought it was just too big, but our experience has been very rewarding and I am sure it can be for you as well.

Can you “guarantee your future”? – Let FarmSafe help you “Better the odds”.

**(As presented by Ant)**

Hopefully David, Heather and Shirlene have challenged the way you see safety in your own farming environment.

From these stories we can experience the pain and anguish that goes with an injury event, plus a positive way to develop a culture that rewards safe behaviour and will be passed onto future generations there after.

To see, and to hear a worst case event like this is heart breaking.

“Gone in seconds”!!

Stabilise your physical, mental and financial future, learn by others misfortune and prepare yourself. FarmSafe is available to help farmers, managers and staff up skill themselves on the best FarmSafe practices around your farm.

The take home message for us all is “better your odds by bettering your skill level in all aspects of farming”

“Why is it important?”

So you are healthy and fit to enjoy the rewards.

At FarmSafe, our vision is a Safer Rural Community