

NORTHLAND FIELD DAYS – MARCH 1-3

over the fence



Exhibition stalwarts share space with rural innovators

The latest rural innovations will vie for attention alongside tried and true products at the 28th Northland Field Days from March 1 to 3.

Field Days sales and marketing coordinator Gwenda Reid says she's expecting more than 500 exhibitors to attract more than 25,000 visitors to the purpose-built 36 hectare site in Dargaville, on the corner of Awakino Point East Road and State Highway 14.

While some recession-hit companies will be absent, plenty of new businesses have signed up to fill their space, with exhibitors from as far afield as the South Island, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Wairarapa, she says.

Newcomers to the event include New Zealand inventions like Number 46 Ltd's "gate plates" created by Waikato's Richard Harker to label farm buildings and paddocks, and local success stories such as Waipu-based soil stabilising product supplier Gravel Lock.

Repeat exhibitors agree that field days is a win-win situation, giving exhibitors a valuable interface with rural customers who can discover new products and take advantage of

exhibitor expertise and show specials.

Richard Pilkington, of Airfoam Wall Insulators, says the event often delivers ongoing work and he'll be offering a chance to win \$1000 off a whole-house installation. Poland Motors' Doug Poland aims to let people know about the latest machinery developments and expand brand awareness, while Steve Elliot, of Kaiwaka Motorcycles, says it's a rare opportunity to meet a large number of rural customers face-to-face in one place.

Although the primary focus is agriculture, lifestyle pavilions and the market area offer something for everyone. Events will include quad bike skills, lawnmower racing, tractor pull and a junior tractor pull in pedal tractors.

The popular Logger Sports will see up to 10 teams competing in a range of events throughout Saturday, including the attention grabbing "hot saws" (standard saws modified with big exhausts).

Throughout the weekend there will also be demonstrations of chainsaw



Competitors get down and dirty in the lawnmower racing.



Clydesdale horse and cart rides are free for Field Days visitors.

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NORTHLAND FIELD DAYS

1-3 March 2012

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NORTHLAND FIELD DAYS

over the fence



Junior tractor racing will back at this year's Northland Field Days.

Innovation on show

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carving and opportunities to buy or commission works.

Site layout changes this year include combining food vendors into two food court areas and a food hall moved near to the popular Sheep Dog Trials where world champion dog handler Chelsea

Marriner and her performing border collie dogs will appear again this year.

Visitors will also be eligible for more than \$20,000 worth of gate prizes. Gates open 9am-4.30pm. Tickets \$10 per adult, 16 and under \$3, under 5 free.

Info: www.northlandfielddays.co.nz

Search on for backyard inventions

National Agricultural Fielddays organisers are scouring the country for everything from backyard inventions to commercial innovations that enhance farming practice or efficiency.

Participants in the Innovation Competition at the June event in Mystery Creek Events Centre, Hamilton, can enter their developments in one of two categories, invention or equipment.

The invention section is for ingenious rural innovations to aid farming that are not commercially produced, while the equipment section invites professionals and businesses to showcase new or improved rural

products. Commercial innovations can be on the market for up to six months before Fielddays, which can help launch products to the industry.

A range of prizes and awards is available including the \$5000 supreme Golden Standard award in innovation.

Organisers say that there will added emphasis on post-competition support for inventors this year, helping to bridge the gap between the creators and potential investors by providing expert guidance on product marketing, development, protection and finance. Entries close May 16.

Info: Visit www.fielddays.co.nz/ InnovationCompetition2012

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NORTHLAND FIELD DAYS

over the fence

Young farmers hone skills for regional competition

Dairy farmers from Tapanui and Mangawhai will go head-to-head with six other contestants in the northern region finals of the National Bank Young Farmer Contest, at Waipua, on March 31 battling for a share of \$140,000 in prizes and a place in the May grand final.

This year's event will be the fourth regional final for Tapanui 26-year-old Katherine Tucker who is the only woman in the 2012 northern region event and one of only three nationwide competing at this level. Last year she came second and this year is aiming for a top four placing in the grand final.

Katherine prefers working outdoors with animals, to a desk job and is working on buying into her parent's dairy farm which runs 630 pedigree jerseys.

In preparation for the competition she's swatting up on current events to brace herself for the pressurised general knowledge buzzer round and turning farming knowledge into question and answers with the help of a software programme developed by her brother. However, she finds the practical session the hardest aspect of the competition, as although tasks usually rely more on technique than sheer strength, they can be drawn from



Tapanui's Katherine Tucker has her sights set on the Young Farmer grand final this year.

an endless variety of farming styles.

Mangawhai dairy farmer Matt Smith agrees that it's hard to prepare for "the unknown" and says he'll be thinking on his feet and relying on his farming experience to see him through. A good all-rounder, he says his strength is in the financial side. At 31, it's his last chance to improve on his past two entries where he ranked respectively 4th and 3rd in the regional final.

He credits a competitive spirit and an encouraging wife for his repeated efforts, which includes two previous entries into Sharemilker of the Year, placing second both times.

Challenges include practical know-how and speed, market knowledge and business sense, as well as interviews, speeches and human resource issues. Practical challenges will take place at Caledonian Park The Centre and the evening venue will be Waipua Coronation Hall from 6.30pm. A TeenAg Competition based on The National Bank Young Farmer Contest will also be held for the second year, with students competing in teams of two.

See eventfinder.co.nz for tickets.

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