**Farming with family at its heart**

Dairy farmer Harman Singh has a passion for breeding cattle. He and his wife Manpreet own a 180 hectare farm in Edendale, Southland which is home to around 500 cows. The 126 hectare run-off down the road not only supplies grass for the dairy farm and accommodates the young stock, it’s also home to Harman’s Mum and Dad, dairy farmers themselves.

“You could say dairy farming is in my blood,” says Harman.

“My great, great grandfather immigrated here from India in 1920 and set up a dairy farm in Te Aroha. I’m a fifth generation New Zealander.

“Before we moved down here 13 years ago, my parents ran several farms up in Waihi. When I left school all I wanted to do was work on the family farm. I never thought about doing anything else,” he says.

The Singhs sold their farms in Waihi and moved down south in 2008, taking on a sheep farm and converting it to dairy. Harman’s father built the milking shed, making the operation fully automated before automation was standard. Now Harman runs the farm with his wife, their two young sons who love to ‘help’, and two staff. Mum and Dad also lend a hand, feeding the young stock on the run-off and doing maintenance and odd jobs on the family’s trusty Case IH tractors.

Harman’s dedication to breeding quality cows has seen him slowly but surely reduce his stock levels over the years. That, and extreme weather events that put pressure on pasture and feed, as well as the aspiration to reduce the environmental impact of his farm. Harman says this focus on quality over quantity has made for happier and healthier cows and better resource allocation.

“It’s not always about milking more cows and producing as much product as we can. It’s about our cows doing better, being able to feed them more grass and having lower overheads. For us it makes sense.”

The Singhs sell their product to local Mataura Valley Milk, who source their milk from a select group of suppliers from the pristine pastures of Southland. It’s the drive to produce the best cows and milk possible that gets Harman out of bed in the morning.

“I’ve always been fascinated by the breeding side of dairy farming,” he says.

“We have predominately Friesian cows, but also some crossbreds. I’m interested in finding the right cows to cross so we get the best possible stock.

“I’m always excited when calving season rolls around to see what calves we’re going to get.”

He must be doing something right. LIC and CRV Ambreed both take several of Harman’s bulls each year.

After 15 years on the job, Harman says he’s still learning. No two days are the same - that’s what keeps his love of farming burning. That, and the people around him.

“Each year brings its own challenges and opportunities, but when you’ve got a great team it’s amazing what you can accomplish.

“Mum and Dad not only still lend a hand where it’s needed but have a wealth of knowledge I can tap into. And my two employees are awesome. One will jump on our big Case IH 185 Puma and get into cultivation work for winter cropping, or get the paddocks mowed and raked ready for baling and wrapping. The other will be in the shed overseeing the milking or whatever else I need help with for the cows.

“To be honest, I think my wife has the hardest job of all – keeping the kids occupied, getting them off to school, getting down to dairy shed to help out and putting a meal on the table at the end of a long day,” says Harman.

“Family has been at the heart of our business for generations. It’s the reason I do what I do, and I hope it will continue for a few generations more!”

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