



Sam and Liz are equity partners in Montana Pastoral Ltd

Farming pathway

Sam and Liz are equity partners with Jenny and Phil McGimpsey in Montana Pastoral Limited, and own 20% of the land, buildings, stock and plant. It's a mutually satisfying and well-structured arrangement where performance and planning is discussed at three meetings, including an AGM, with an independent chairman Hamish Bielski.

"It's a great team and we've had a lot of support and guidance from Jenny, Phil and Hamish," Sam says.

The equity partnership, formed in 2015 was the big leap forward the Bartons had been desperately seeking after following up to various degrees about 25 potential farming pathway leads.

Neither Sam nor Liz are from farming families but both had a huge liking for

farming and the outdoors. Liz had a rural upbringing at Heddon Bush, near Winton, and from an early age had a hankering to go farming which she pursued on leaving school. Sam was raised in Whanganui. His father was a rural-based vet which helped stir Sam's interest in farming, also, his uncles farmed at Mangamahu and he spent a lot of his spare time helping them.


After leaving school he did a stint in Australia working as a presser in a shearing gang, and on returning home ended up in the South Island on Harry Brensell's West Otago farm.

"It was a great start for me as it allowed me to gain knowledge and experience on an intensive and extensive commercial operation as well as a sheep stud."

He worked there from 2000 until 2004, and returned in a senior role from 2009 until 2011 after five years at Peters Genetics, Beaumont.

Sam met Liz in 2010, they got married and in 2011 moved to Awatere Station at Waikaia owned by James and Denise Anderson.

Sam has high praise for the Andersons' encouragement and what initially seemed like overly high expectations. James told Sam to set his sights high, look at the biggest and best farm manager job position, and use that to determine his biggest weaknesses and ways to build knowledge to overcome the weakness. For Sam, financial and people management credentials were a limiting factor that he bolstered through an Ag ITO Financial and Business Management course. He also completed in 2015 Rabobank's Farm Managers Programme.

The Andersons also provided the practical means to build equity. The Bartons bought Awatere cows and for five years calved them and sold the finished progeny. They were share-farming 140 cattle on two farms for three years and put the money they got from selling them towards the equity partnership. Throughout the equity building process and share farming they became familiar with Cash Manager, GST registrations and returns which made the transition to ownership a lot less daunting, Sam says. 

FINGER ON THE PULSE

Body condition scoring, soil testing, and pasture measuring are simple practical tools the Bartons use to keep production on track. Cash Manager, another widely available tool, is used a lot for budgeting and planning.

"We use it to set budgets and keep tabs on expenses throughout the year. After setting the budget we will revise it often. Cash Manager's ability to report is also very important

because it keeps shareholders and our accountant up to date on financial performance".

They run a tight budget so they can suck up any adverse price fluctuations and extreme weather events.

"When we get to late autumn we have a good handle on financial performance and that's when we might look at capital purchases and larger R&M projects."